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The Rider of the King Log



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HOLMAN DAY

THE RIDER OF THE KING LOG
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KING SPRUCE
THE RAMRODDERS
THE RED LANE
SQUIRE PHIN
THE SKIPPER AND THE SKIPPED
WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS

HARPER & BROTHERS NEW YORK
[ESTABLISHED 1817]



"I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THE AIRS AND SNEERS OF THE
MAPTHORN FAMILY"

❧ THE RIDER ❧
OF THE KING LOG

A Romance of the Northeast Border

by HOLMAN DAY ❧ ❧ ❧

Author of "The Red Lane" "King
Spruce" "Where Your Treasure Is" Etc.

With a Frontispiece by
HAROLD BRETT



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THE RIDER OF THE KING LOG

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The Rider of the King Log

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CHAPTER I

A careless "Yes!" in New York provokes back-handed heliolatry and "trips" the dynamite of "Rend-rock" Mulkern in the far Toban.

THE bulletin-board in the chapel's vestibule at Manor Verona—most select institution for the education of young women who are well-sponsored—is made up of tiles of shiny white porcelain; there are silver pegs on which bulletins may be impaled. In general atmosphere Manor Verona bears out the peculiar suggestiveness of its bulletin-board. After looking at the board the casual visitor has few questions to ask regarding the conduct, educational methods, and exclusiveness at Manor Verona.

One morning in April, in the middle of the shiny board appeared announcement that the college managers, considering certain exigencies and conveniences, had decided to shorten the school year by two weeks; the graduation day of the seniors was changed from June 22d to June 8th.

The select young ladies did not seem to be surprised when they gathered about the board before chapel. They had gossippingly discounted the news some time before. Cora Marthorn of the Senior Class had been planning, had been organizing. She also had been talking! She pro-

posed to arrange an Alaska expedition for her own special set in the Senior Class, and everybody knows that Alaska is most interesting at the season of the midnight sun in summer—and summer is short and Alaska is a long way from Manor Verona!

The posting of that announcement simply meant that Col. Stephen Marthorn had said "Yes!" to a pleading daughter.

Colonel Marthorn had it in his power to secure respectful deference of various sorts at Manor Verona because he was president of the trustees, donor of the observatory, and had dropped certain encouraging remarks about the need of a new recreation building.

The colonel's "Yes!" was indulgent and rather careless assent. The matter of an earlier Commencement seemed to have nothing whatever to do with his business interests—and that way lay his chief cautiousness in action. His business interests, for the most part, outside of directorships in half a dozen banks, were involved in the presidency of the Great Temiscouata Company, powerful syndicate of pulp and paper interests in the north country. He administered its broader affairs, financial and legal, from its New York offices and carefully kept away from the big woods in order that his "sense of perspective might not be dulled by the details of mere operation."

That the date of the Commencement at Manor Verona could be concerned in any way, however remote, with the vital interests of the Great Temiscouata Company was contingency so unimaginable that Colonel Marthorn certainly would have questioned his own sanity if he had found himself giving serious consideration to such a possibility.

Clare Kavanagh, also of the Senior Class which was so

gloriously decorated by the daughter of Colonel Marthorn, mentioned the change in date when she wrote her perfunctory weekly letter to her father. She made only listless reference to the matter; Miss Kavanagh's letters to her father were not very spirited affairs.

Once—it was in her first year at Manor Verona—Clare Kavanagh had overheard a contemptuous reference which was made concerning her when the matter of class elections was canvassed. Some omniscient young miss had volunteered the statement that the Kavanagh girl's father was "some kind of a wood-chopper" and lived away off in a camp in the forest. That statement was never contradicted during Clare Kavanagh's stay at the college. The isolation of John Kavanagh in the Toban largely accounted, of course, for lack of definite information regarding him in a select college for young women. In placing Clare in an institution of learning he had used a Congressman to discover for him the college which charged the highest prices, through the Congressman's ready co-operation for the sake of the votes of the Kavanagh cohorts an agreeable sponsor was provided in the person of the Congressman's wife. Therefore, Clare Kavanagh had not required the doubtful ægis of the personality of her father.

By rail, by stage-coach, by tote-team, and in the cap of Elie Lebel—for part of the last leg of its journey—Clare's letter traveled to the hands of John Kavanagh. A man named Mike finally delivered the letter, along with Kavanagh's other mail. Elie Lebel failed to complete the journey. In his haste to arrive at the field headquarters of his master, the lord of the great Toban country, Elie Lebel sought to cross the black ice of Ragmuff. After he had fallen through the crumbling shell of winter

sheathing and had threshed the dissolving needles of the rotten ice, seeking arm rest in vain, he used his last strength to throw his cap, with the letters, as far out upon the ice as he was able. Then Elie Lebel went down before help from shore could reach hands to him. His last thoughts, so his act showed, had been of the interests of the master. They who served John Xavier Kavanagh, they all brought to their service that like measure of devotion. Even when the flat of the master's hard hand was lifted from the smitten face of an offender the grin which the lifted hand disclosed would be both beseeching and forgiving.

"A good lad, a brave lad, and spry! I don't just mind me if he was married," said Kavanagh, sorting his letters.

"He was," said the timekeeper. "At Christmas, last come! I have been sending his pay to her."

"Ay, and send the poor lad when the grapples have found him. Pin an extra five hundred on his jacket where the little widow will see it quick."

He stripped the soggy envelope from Clare's letter and flung the discarded paper to the wind.

"June the eight', you say! Dod butter 'em! That's the way they save money, eh, docking two weeks from the last of her schooling and me paying a thousand dollars a minute for the girl to be made wise and well-mannered! June the eight'?" He shoved the letter into the pocket of his shirt and thumped his fist against his breast where the letter lay. He addressed all in hearing. "June the eight'—two weeks early, and the dead-waters still ice-bound, all clouds and never a glimmer o' sunlight, and the snow sticking to the mountains instead of doing business in the river! Two weeks early, and the drive all of two weeks late! Not a stick moved yet from ram-

down to landing! Dod butter 'em! But pass the word to the bosses and the boys! We'll have the head of the drive down-river in the sorting-boom in time for me to see my girl step out on the platform among the best of 'em. I'll blow the bottom out of the damn' river else! Let me at that sun!"

He climbed to a pinnacle of rock, out-thrust of gray ledge above the deep gorge where Abol's sullen waters grumbled under early April's black ice.

Thatching the snowy slopes and piled high on the blackened ice were countless logs, each notched with the talismanic "X. K.," the registered log-mark of John Xavier Kavanagh.

And those two letters, so far as the speech of men availed behind the master's back, were notched into the personality of Kavanagh; they called him "Old X. K." in all the Toban region, and that region ranges north even to the lonely mountains of Notre Dame.

Lifted there in the gray morning above the blinking eyes of his men—an army with pick-poles for lances and cant-dogs for maces—his color matched the dawn and made him appear almost a part of the ledge on which he stood; his tousled, roached hair and his bristling beard were as gray as the belted jacket he wore.

They who gazed up at him listened while he bawled anathema and insults at the sun.

"Eh? What's what?" inquired one who came to "Rend-rock" Mulkern, who was coddling his grim pets in front of the cook-fire.

"A bit of a word in a letter from his colleen at the big school," said the dynamite boss. "Sure, it seems that there's other stuff besides this that can blow a man up." He wagged a stick of dynamite above his head.

"'June the eight', I heard him hooting!"

"It's June the eight' he rides the king log of the head o' the drive into the sorting-boom!"

"It can't be done!"

Mulkern set the dynamite sticks nearer the fire. "Then it won't be *his* fault—nor mine—nor the fault of *this*! There was some kind of a red-hot gad in that letter."

"But Miss Clare wouldn't—"

"Then there was some kind of a jump-your-John behind it—somewhere!"

Kavanagh pulled off his cap and his gray mane bristled like hair on the back of an enraged dog. He stood facing the doors of the east as one might stand outside the house of a human enemy, hurling provocation and inviting combat.

"It's a wonder he ain't trying to fling rocks in t'roo the old sun's windys," remarked "Rend-rock" Mulkern, warming his dynamite to business temperature.

"Come out, ye lazy blackguard, and give us some heat," shouted "Old X. K." "Ye've been loafing your time away under clouds too long! Come out of your blankets and go to work."

"I've seen him kick a dozen turn-over snoozers out from under their blankets of a cold morning," declared "Sizzle" Cyrus, the cook. "And if his leg was long enough to reach what he's yelling at he'd take the resk of the heat."

For Kavanagh's army of men a date which had been set by the whim of Col. Stephen Marthorn's daughter became, from that gray morning, the talismanic battle-cry for dawn-to-dark days of sweating toil and furious haste. There was added another battle-cry which was to go echoing down the land, even to the ears of Colonel

Marthorn, enthroned as king of paper-makers above the rattle and roar of New York's traffic: "To hell with their pulp stuff! The X. K. timber drive has got to go through!"

A double crew of spume-soaked toilers, feeding at his wangan-board and daring death for him, the everlasting roar of rend-rock and the crash of splitting logs, sacrificed to clear the jams—an army and a campaign in order that John Xavier Kavanagh might have his day of pride in seeing his daughter step forth "with the best of 'em."

It was all for "Old X. K." and the colleen!

The idea that John Kavanagh might delegate his duties, or fail in his regular rendezvous with the head of the X. K. drive at the sorting-boom in order to indulge sentiment with his softer mission at the big school, came into no man's thoughts; there was no X. K. viceroy in the Toban.

But in spite of Kavanagh's daily anathema the solemn masses of the cirro-stratus barred the horizon and the dark nimbus was banked in the heavens. The clouds flung down handfuls of rain occasionally, but the chill air turned the moisture into sleet. The snows which should have been sent slithering athwart the side of the hills long before, pried loose by the levers of light and warmth, sulked in their valleys and clung to the mountain-tops. And the logs with the X. K. mark sulked as well!

Kavanagh came, one morning, to the lean-to where the cook-fire was blazing in the misty gloom.

"Don't be afraid of it, Mulkern," he said, using careless foot to roll scattered sticks of dynamite into a little heap.

"Did I ever show that I was afraid of it?" demanded "Rend-rock," promptly offended.

"I meant, don't be saving of it! Give the old Abol blazes—all she can chew. You know it's a date for me and the head of the drive—June the eight'."

"June the eight' it is," agreed "Rend-rock," stacking his dangerous pets nearer the fire. "I'll stick all the heat into 'em they'll stand without letting go!"

"I wish I'd been a better man in my life and stood in closer with the saints," confessed Kavanagh, grimly jesting. "I've been so long a stranger to 'em that I don't even know one by name well enough to call on him for a little help. But I reckon no one of 'em ever had any experience in starting a balky drive. Do you know of any saint, Mulkern, who isn't likely to lay up grudges against me for being unneighborly?"

"They tell me that Saint Ant'ony is as easy-going as anny of 'em, sir. I know him best, though I have been careful not to bother him like some folks always is doing. But when the fool totter lost offn his team a box of dinny-mite in the snow I went and found it after I'd said a bit of a prayer to Saint Ant'ony. Oh, he's as kind-natured as anny of 'em!"

"Finds things, does he?"

"It's his spiciality, sir!"

"Perhaps he can find that sun and send it back to its job."

"He has done wonderful things, sir. And it's the pigs he protects, too! Yes, sir! Every family in Skibbereen, when I lived there, had a bit of a word to say to good Saint Ant'ony about seeing that the pig prospered."

"Pigs, eh?" The master looked down on the cookees who were ladling the crew's breakfasts out of the steaming pots into the pannikins. "Looks after the pigs! Then he's just the saint to be interested in a driving-crew,

Mulkern. Look at 'em getting ready to eat! So empty, every morning, that you can hear the first mouthful when it drops into 'em! You said a bit of a prayer to Saint Anthony, hey?"

"I did—and promised a candle. That 'll be for the time when I get down-river, sir."

Kavanagh was silent for a little while, looking down on Mulkern while the dynamite boss stacked the little cylinders—canned destruction pressed in the wrapping of brown paper.

"Hand me up a chilled one, Mulkern." He tested the stick with the palm of his hand when the boss had obeyed.

"This ought to burn instead of bust, hadn't it?"

"It's notional stuff, it is, sir! Mebbe it will burn. It's chilled. Sometimes they always bust."

Kavanagh removed the detonating cap. He plucked a brand from the cook-fire and stepped apart and set the cylinder upright on a rock. He lighted it and it burned with a harmless flush of flame.

"Sizzle" Cyrus had ducked down behind the great stew-kettle.

"Rend-rock" Mulkern crossed himself, staring open-mouthed at the flaming explosive, anxious in spite of his usual careless disregard of danger. But if that stick had "busted," the rest of the stock above which he was kneeling would have been "tripped" into a cataclysm of disaster.

"Well, that's the best I can do for a candle," stated Kavanagh. "I meant it in the properest way, and I hope it will be taken as I mean it. And I said my bit of a prayer, Mulkern."

"So did I when you put the flare to it," growled the

boss. "Sure, it's a sign that he took it as you meant it, for he didn't allow it to bust."

John Kavanagh grabbed his pannikin from the cookee and sat down calmly beside the warming dynamite to eat his breakfast.

While he was eating he watched Mulkern go slouching away into the gorge, his grim burden bulging in the ruck-bag on his back, and soon the bellowing echoes announced that the blasting boss was at his work.

Men of the X. K. army went tramping off in the drizzling dawn, the hooks of their cant-dogs rattling as they marched. And afar on the hills, like thunder mellowed by distance, sounded the boom of rolling logs, tumbling down the runways and crashing through the broken ice.

All at once, late in the afternoon of that day, making headlong speed from one ramdown to another, Kavanagh lifted his nose like a sniffing dog. The clouds were no longer hard and striated in slaty density. The masses of vapor bellied and bulged. He licked his finger and held it in the air. The wind had shifted into the south! Its moisty mellowness caressed his cheek. He kicked savagely at the snow in which he stood, casting damp lumps of it toward the river.

"On with ye, ye loafing slush! Get down there where ye belong and boost the X. K. drive! Here comes the south wind to lend ye a hand."

All that night the soft deluge wept down from the skies. In the morning the rivulets were babbling, the mild sigh of spring was in the sweeping breeze, the growl of the gorge was deeper and fuller and growing, whiffs of spray were floating high above the banks.

After holding his peace until breakfast, "Rend-rock"

Mulkern ventured upon a subject. "Not that it's for me to tell anny man his juty—but when a job is done and done well, where do the t'anks belong, sir?"

"What kind of a compliment are you fishing for now?" demanded "Old X. K.," setting tighter the latchets of his spike-sole boots.

"God forgive me for ever wanting compliments. I don't need 'em. But yesterday I said to him for you, I says, 'Saint Ant'ony, here's a fine man who needs—'"

"Look here, Mulkern, I pay my thanks like I pay my debts, measure for measure! I woke in the night and told Saint Anthony that little Father Laflamme shall have whatever is most needed at Sante Agathe, even if it's a peal of bells. Is there any other way of paying a saint?"

Mulkern shook his head. "Oh, I see the gleam of the divil in yer eye, sir. Ye're like the most! It may be the saint, say you, but it's more like all luck and chance, ye say! Ye ain't depending on the saint."

"If it's true that God helps those who help themselves, then it must be the same way with the saints, Mulkern. I'm not scoffing, understand ye! But warm your dynamite, man, just the same. I'm not asking the saint to do it all. He has most like got other jobs on his hands."

He pulled his cap down over his forehead and set himself at the head of the X. K. crew. He proposed to "take the water" with him—and the paper folks might look after themselves!

But the epic of that drive is not for this tale. It would require a volume by itself.

Abol vomited torrent, ice, and logs. The Ragmuff Dead-water received impetus of flood which carried along the head of the drive. Jackanegassis Rips hurried with desperate haste and Umsaskis Lake interposed no stay.

Gulf Hagas, roaring cañon, waited to hurl along what was offered, and the Black Gods Flume, with froth and welter of waters, sent the swirling, up-ending logs through to Amegus Bend, where the mighty, steady current took them in more careful charge. The water was so high that even the profile ledges of the Black Gods, ranged one by one in grim isolation along two miles of white water, did not demand their usual toll in delays and shattered logs. "Old Lute," "Chief Sockbesin," "Mother Machree" (how she does gather timber to her motherly breast in the times of slack water!), "Linger Lucy" (siren of all ledges), and "Jillpoke Jack" glowered on the passing drive with their rock faces, but the leaping waters flung the logs over and on their way. At the Hulling Machine Falls (who named that ugly chasm chose well), where Deadman's Strip begins, the haste of the drive took horrid toll of flesh.

"Old Stone-snipe," as he was called, the ancient hermit who long had claimed for his own the cave and the great gray cliff above the narrow trail of the Strip, chiseled, that year, the names of three men of the X. K. crew. That was his single hobby, his constant toil in summer heat and winter cold, clinking away with mallet and chisel on the face of the cliff, sinking Bible texts deep into the rock and adding on this memorial tablet, as springs came and went, the names of men who were victims of the Hulling Machine.

In these words, just written, there stand the bare outlines of the X. K. drive, even as the black, bare skull is solidly gripped by the crotch of the beech-tree at Skull-tree White-water. Imagination must supply the flesh.

Once past Amegus and into the broad stretches of Soboia Grand, John Kavanagh drew deep breaths again

and began to shed his various layers of choler, cantankerousness, pugnacity, and general cussedness. It was seasonably early in May and he could see his way clear from then on. The head of his drive in the sorting-boom in June, and his rendezvous with his daughter, both were assured!

As to the raging, roaring, threatening field bosses of the Temiscouata Company, who were attacking him in the rear and on his flanks, he was minding them as little as he was concerned about the swarms of black-flies which broke their stingers in efforts to bite his hairy hands and his leather countenance.

The underlings of the Temiscouata Company were trying to square themselves in a bad, bad matter without owning up to the head office—to the much-feared mighty men in New York—that John Xavier Kavanagh by force, fury, and lawless tactics had brought about a situation which might hang up the pulp-timber drive for the season and endanger the supply for the paper-mills.

The X. K. logs were safely in Sobois Grand and had the right of way at the sluice-dam; Kavanagh's pocket booms were flung around acres of his floating timber, and Sobois Grand was choked ahead of the pulp stuff. By the use of dynamite and general devilishness he had brought the water along with him.

The Temiscouata Company used much of the smaller timber—"robbed the squirrels," said "Old X. K."—depended on smaller streams which were tributary to the great river, and, being later comers into the Toban, logged in remote sections. They had been left high and dry that year!

And Col. Stephen Marthorn did not even know that John Xavier Kavanagh had a daughter in the Senior

Class at Manor Verona! Miss Cora Marthorn did not know it—never having heard of John Xavier Kavanagh. The silent girl whose father was “some kind of a wood-chopper” had never interested Miss Marthorn to the extent even of indifferent investigation.

“Old X. K.,” seeing that he had the Sobois Grand well plugged, did not concern himself as to rights or wrongs in the matter; in grabbing timberlands or in grabbing privileges in the Toban he had been a pioneer, and he had always acted rather openly according to the questionable code which others observed more secretly.

He had considerable leisure at Sobois Grand while the big pocket booms were warped across the dead-water to the dam; so he smoked his pipe with much serenity and watched his logs go past.

CHAPTER II

The code of combat in the Toban as confessed baldly to President Stephen Marthorn, after John Kavanagh has defied his foes, derided his competitors, and ordered his grand clothes.

IN moving the booms at Soboïs Grand they used "head-works."

This was a gigantic capstan mounted on a floating platform and provided with great arms which could be manned by a big crew. The platform was anchored far ahead of the boom, and then, by means of a warp and the capstan, the boom was drawn to the head-works; the operation was repeated over and over.

Kavanagh's favorite post was on the platform, where he could puff his pipe and watch the expanse of logs come marching toward him.

The creak of the capstan, the grunt of the dripping warp, and the steady tramp of the men, marching around and around, made music which he enjoyed. Every now and then they enlivened the tedium of their job with a lusty "Come-all-ye!"—a shanty. Kavanagh enjoyed that, too. And there were times when that roaring burst of song was not merely idle diversion. John Kavanagh was in the habit of receiving all comers at his extemporized office on the head-works. They who came to the shore and asked to see him were ferried over in one of the

bateaux. "Old X. K.," having time to kill, always listened a few minutes to every man's errand, but as soon as his curiosity had been satisfied and he was weary of solicitation to buy this or that, or to sell something he did not want to sell, or resented remarks of those who came to protest or to plead, he had a signal for the gaze of his keen and quizzical choristers. And when they began to roar their lord would shake his head deprecatingly, but would smile as much as to say, "I can't do anything with 'em, you see!"

There are some shanties in the Toban country that have a chorus for each line. When the rhythm marks the slow trudge of men marching about a head-works capstan, a shanty can be so thriftily expended that it will last long enough for all practical purposes in the way of discouraging men who attempt to talk to be heard above the clamor.

The bateau ferry, operated by the handy-Andy named Mike, brought one personage who received the handsomest greeting granted that spring to any visitor. Kavanagh reached down into the bateau and lifted the little man to the platform the moment he announced his name and stated his identity.

"The tailor-man! Here ye are! Well, I couldn't come to *you*. So I asked my timekeeper to find a good man and send him to *me*! And you have got the message right, eh? You know what's wanted?"

"I think so, sir—from the letter. Dress suit. Then something semi-formal—afternoon wear—for function—"

"A swaller-tail coat—open-face down to here!" Kavanagh set the edge of his hands against his abdomen. "Shirt to here! Then tails to here!" He measured by sliding his hands down his legs.

"Yes, sir! I understand, sir! I have brought samples. I'll show you—"

"And a Prince Albert—and a white vest! Silk-faced and tails plenty long!"

"But in these days, for afternoon wear—"

Kavanagh put up his big hand and slowly sliced air back and forth in protest. "A Prince Albert, I say. I was married in one. No man can put on real style in anything else. And a plug-hat!" He was shouting. His gaping men, overhearing, were slowing down.

"Very well, sir!" agreed the tailor, bowing.

"Stand-up dickies and varnished boots! Go get 'em all and put it in the bill!"

"Yes, sir! It can be arranged nicely. If you will please remove your jacket!" The little man looped a tape-measure around his neck and pulled out a note-book. The capstan had slowed down until the staring men were barely scuffing their feet a few inches at a time. Kavanagh opened his mouth as if about to yelp at them, but a sudden grin replaced his scowl. Without doubt he was then beholding a mental picture of John Xavier Kavanagh as that gentleman would appear when arrayed in his new habiliments.

"Boys, you know what June the eight' means to me! It's the day when I'll see Colleen Clare step out with the best of 'em. Well, the old man won't shame her. Knock off! Take a rest! You shall see me measured for the duds to do credit to her."

He walked to the raised deck of the platform and the men crowded around, watching the operation with as much seriousness as if it were a rite. When the little tailor called aloud his numbers and set them down in his note-book the bystanders could not have appeared more

profoundly impressed if he had been a necromancer muttering cabalistic words.

So entirely absorbed were those on the head-works float that the approach of a bateau was unnoticed and one of the men in it was obliged to shout a hail to secure attention.

Kavanagh's men parted at wave of his hand so that he might secure clear view.

Beside the rowers in the bateau were some of the Temiscouata bosses who had been barking at his heels; there was also a personage who wore a hard hat and had an urban air.

"Meet Mr. Donaldson, Mr. Kavanagh," called the drive-master of the Temiscouata Company. He made the introduction with a wave of his hand and with a pompous tone which suggested that here, at last, was somebody who wore the royal purple of authority.

"Old X. K.," in his shirt-sleeves, cap and jacket at his feet, gray hair rumpled, waved hand of welcome and invited the visitors on board. Only Donaldson accepted.

"I am the second vice-president of the Great Temiscouata, Mr. Kavanagh."

"Yes, sir," agreed the old man, unperturbed.

"There's a situation here which should have been reported to the main office before this."

Kavanagh did not reply; he jutted out his thick eyebrows as if puzzled to guess how all this concerned him.

"I'm not going to beat about the bush, sir. You know the river and the present conditions even better than I do. Our drive has been stranded, or at least stands a show of being stranded."

"Hung up, we call it in these parts," corrected "Old X. K."

"You're a practical man, Mr. Kavanagh. What is your opinion? Don't you think that by our joining drives with you and coming down with your rear we could get most of our cut to the mills this year?"

"I wouldn't wonder a mite," stated Kavanagh, with enthusiasm. "I've got the best boys who ever wet a pick-pole in this river." He smacked heavy hand against the shoulder of the nearest man.

"I'm glad that we agree. I am here with full authority to arrange to join drives with you."

"Are ye so?" It was not sarcasm; it was rather mild surprise.

"I trust that you're going to meet me half-way in the matter."

"I can't meet the Temiscouata without turning around and going back'ards, sir. I'm bound down *this* way!" He jabbed thumb over his shoulder.

"Yes, and so are we. But you're in our way. As to joining drives—"

"Man, you can't join drives with *me*! What talk is that you're making? The time to talk joining drives is when drives start, not when the head drive is safe down, bank to bank, the way cleared. And further, I wouldn't have your damn' pipe-stems of pulp stuff mixed in with good honest timber like mine, anyway. Ye *can't* join drives! Ye never *could*!"

Vice-president Donaldson, after viewing conditions, was in no easy or amiable frame of mind.

"Do you mean that you're on this river to fight us, Kavanagh?"

"I'll fight no man if he keeps out from under my feet and is decent of speech. And do ye keep those blusterers away from here after this!" He pointed to the men in

the bateau. "I'll have no dealings with 'em. My drive is on its way."

"It's on its way because you have blown splash-dams on the tributary streams in order to raise the water! You have stolen the water away from us."

"I built the splash-dams before your company ever came on these lands to whittle down your kindling-wood."

"But the waters are not yours, sir. The dams are on our lands."

"*You* say so," returned Kavanagh, coolly. "*I* say so about a lot of my lands. Say-so can beat titles up here—especially soldiers' grants and tax titles—but the say-so has got to be backed up with this!" He raised his big hands in the air and slowly clinched his fingers into a hard grip. "I'm holding on!"

"We're going to have some law up in this section," shouted Donaldson.

"I reckon I'll obey it when it comes—unless it's law that you fellows buy for yourselves. In the mean time I'm running my business as I did before your blasted mills ever began to chew and slaver good wood to waste in cheap paper. I'm here on Sobois Grand. The river is still running up there. Throw in your jackstraws and come along." He turned to the tailor. "And now back to something in the line of real business! Was it the vest you was measuring?"

The two of them were standing on the big circle attached to the foot of the capstan.

"Can you measure me and make your figures just as well if there's a bit of a noise going on?" inquired the patron.

"Oh yes!"

"Don't think riding around on this capstan would make you dizzy, eh?"

"It wouldn't bother me a mite, I'm quite sure."

Vice-president Donaldson had raised his voice and was expressing himself with great vigor.

"Walk her 'round—walk her 'round, boys!" snapped their master. "Don't you hear this Temiscouata gent ordering us to get out of his way? Walk her 'round! Hup! Hup!" Then with thumb at his ear he wriggled his fingers; it was his call for song.

His men clutched the big bars, bent to their work, and began their stamping march, the spikes of their shoes biting into the weather-gray planks that were already chewed and slivered by the thrusting feet which had trod there in weary rounds year after year.

To escape the circling bars Donaldson was obliged to retreat to the edge of the platform; thus did "Old X. K." obtain for himself a certain kind of privacy and maintain as much aloofness in his woods "office" as did Stephen Marthorn behind his paneled oak and his crusted glass in New York.

"It's no way to use a business man, Kavanagh, after I have come all these miles! I insist—"

The head chorister bawled a prolonged "Oh-h-h-h!" to pitch the key. Then they were off!

"Come all ye bean-fed larrigan lads
And listen unto me;
I'll sing a song to the tune we played
With a cross-cut on a tree.
Spit in yer fists and man the ends,
A rock to ride the middle,
Ram her over and ram her back,
And that's the old gash-fiddle.
Slivers and sawdust and swagon stew
We're the bullies of Kavanagh's crew"

The vice-president of the Temiscouata remained for a time, but finally his dignity could no longer endure this intolerable baiting. The uselessness of attempting anything further with Kavanagh was apparent. The old man would not even look the way of the important emissary from the metropolis. Therefore Donaldson went away in his bateau, white with rage, and Kavanagh, riding around and around on the capstan foot, was measured for his finery.

The news that John Kavanagh and the Great Temiscouata had openly and vengefully declared war on each other was news that had to do with vast property interests and with imperiled values. But a clinch of that sort was to be expected, anyway, and the matter was not much discussed in the Toban. However, the news that John Kavanagh was going to buy a plug-hat and wear it down to his daughter's graduation kept all tongues busy. That was real news!

Donaldson, after conferences with experts and bosses, and after patching up makeshift methods of insuring, at extra cost, the belated delivery of at least a portion of the pulp-stuff drive, hurried to New York and reported on Kavanagh's nature and characteristics to Col. Stephen Marthorn. He gave to the old dog of the north woods not one redeeming quality. Nor would Kavanagh, if consulted, have solicited more consideration from a man whom he was fighting.

"As hard as rock from his head to his toes. Can beat no sense into him nor get any ordinary, human, business intelligence out," reported the second vice-president to his chief. "He would rather have his own way than make money. He wouldn't even let our men help him in getting his drive out of *our* way. He has stolen so

much, himself, that he can't figure anybody else as anything except a thief. And the trouble is, sir, men of his kind seem to outlive all the decent and honest men."

Immediately after expressing that opinion Vice-president Donaldson produced surveyors' maps which had been handed to him in the north country by employees and laid them before the president.

The outstanding and significant features of those maps were explained by the vice-president as he trailed his finger along dotted black lines and drove down an emphatic thumb on lines of solid red. He was showing his chief what had been accomplished in the way of increasing the holdings of the Great Temiscouata. He had much to say about relocation of bounds by taking advantage of the early explorers' vague or confusing nomenclature; he dropped slight hints about fortifying the memories of old inhabitants by the use of a little cash; in cases where the syndicate field bosses had taken possession without bothering to untangle titles, Marthorn was assured that there would be small chance of trouble, the parties who had been jumped were too poor to hope to be able to fight a big corporation in the courts.

"At least ten thousand acres clean gain without actually buying a foot, and a lot of stumpage options, in the bargain, where we're paying certain wise ones to keep their mouths shut; it's better business than trying to hunt up real owners." Such was Donaldson's enthusiastic report to his superior.

Colonel Marthorn, who, as has been stated, kept out of the north country so that details might not interfere with his sense of perspective, was in a better mental position than Donaldson to note the inharmony of what the vice-president had said regarding John Kavanagh's

abhorrent depravity compared with the Donaldson-announced policy of the Great Temiscouata.

Stephen Marthorn rubbed his nose!

The top letter of a sheaf awaiting his signature carried a most gracious agreement to give liberally to a layman's movement for moral uplift among young men. He noted, while he meditated, a few lines in the letter, expressing his sentiments as to moral uplift. He was not a hypocrite; the sentiments were sincere. Personally, he had never subscribed to villainy. He had publicly deplored certain tendencies in "big business." He wondered if the vice-president realized just how brazenly he had declared the principles of the picaroon.

"How long have you been down from the woods, Mr. Donaldson?"

"I reached the city last night."

"You find conditions very hard to handle up there, eh?"

"With a club in each hand and a knife between your teeth!" declared Donaldson, ferocity in tone and eyes. "I've had a tough trip!"

With a compassionating smile did President Marthorn take off some of the edge of his rebuke. "I truly wish you had deferred your statement to me until some of that wildwood spirit had been smoothed by fresh contact with the city. Pretty raw and brutal!"

"Well, the situation isn't much different from what it has been from the start."

"Probably not. I fear not. But I think, in the past, you have always clothed business facts in business terms."

"You'll have to make allowance for the state of mind I am in. We can't do business up there by applying Sunday-school maxims; the other fellow has his own rules and they antedate ours."

"But taking ten thousand acres!"

"Colonel, we have bought whenever we have found settled titles; all our first tracts were secured that way. But to buy—to put our good money into sellers' fists when titles are not clear—is inviting unending blackmail from all kinds of claimants. It's best to elbow with the other grabbers and grab what you can. Our size helps us. Our corporation counsel is working on salary!"

"This stumpage! Paying hush-money!"

"On Oxbow township we paid eleven thousand dollars one year for stumpage rights. We thought we had located the real heirs, and all of them. They were cousins—one branch of a family. Then along came a grandson from out West somewhere—the real heir. Put an injunction on our cut and we had to pay all over again. It's safer the other way—the price is nominal."

President Marthorn, having care for the finances of the Great Temiscouata, could not advise the second vice-president to employ a system of indiscriminate wastage in the matter of handling timber-land heirs in the north country; just then he plainly had difficulty in choosing words for a discussion of the moral issues. The two sat and looked at each other for some time without speaking.

"It's very bad, but of course the disorganization is not through fault of ours. As you say, the other fellow was there first. We must see what we can get by legislation. This mutual piracy is dreadful—dreadful, Donaldson." Colonel Marthorn "spacked" his hand down and the blow fell on the sheaf of letters. "I propose to put our company interests on a better basis."

"We can do so when men like Kavanagh turn up their toes."

"I believe **you** have intimated that he is in a very healthy condition just now!"

"Very!"

"But this year he seems to be particularly domineering and disastrous where we are concerned. Did I understand you to say that he is in such a hurry to get his drive down that he does not care how much he injures our prospects?"

"That's it exactly."

"Any special reason?"

"The old blowhard has set some kind of a date. I hadn't the patience to ask why. I suppose it's only out of his spirit of brag—that spirit of 'to hell with the pulp stuff!'"

Colonel Marthorn's eyes glittered with sudden ire. "I know the type, Donaldson! The old-fashioned, wasting, senseless slambangers! They ought to be kept out of the way of scientific, up-to-date business, just as mad dogs must be kept out of the streets. Dangerous men, such men as this Kavanagh!"

However, the ogre of the north country, down with the head of the X. K. drive, would not have impressed the colonel as an especially dangerous character right at that moment.

Kavanagh was holding a sort of levee in the log-walled wing of his mansion which overlooked the roar of Tulandic Falls. Under the tan with which sun and wind had painted his skin during the days of the struggle between Abol and the sorting-boom there was a haggard grayness and his cheeks were drawn and his eyes were hollow. Frequently he clapped his hand to his left side and groaned.

The first heat of June was in the air and shimmered

before the open windows and the broad door. The room was low, but it was as spacious as a baronial hall and was dim and cool. The furniture was defiantly home-made, if one may employ that adverb. The rustic points of each piece were accentuated rather than concealed. The X-legged tables were fashioned of cedar which had been split and shaved. The chairs were made of little saplings of peeled spruce on which the slender limbs had been left and had been fantastically curled or twisted. No two chairs were alike. The great black fireplace showed that many a log had been sacrificed there to the god of the frosts. There were bunks along one side of the room, and a "deacon seat" of the lumber-camp type was in front of the bunks. The floor was pitted with the prints of the spikes of driving-boots. Axes and cross-cut saws alternated with mounted heads of animals for wall decorations. In the lean-to off the main room the cook was rattling more pannikins and iron vessels than china dishes. The place had an odor of its own; one realized that there must be fresh boughs under the mattresses of the bunks, and the tang of bacon was added.

In one corner of the room the little tailor was busily engaged with his help, which he had brought up from the city; they were finishing John Kavanagh's garments of ceremony and were working on the spot, against time.

Half a dozen woodsmen loafed in the sun outside the broad door, whittling and buzzing in casuals of conversation.

A tamed fox in the yard fraternized over meat scraps with an amiable Canadian lynx.

"It seems to be taking hold of him worse than what it was first figured when it happened," said the man named

Mike. The sound of a groan from within reached those who were without. "It was me that stuck out the pick-pole handle he grabbed to climb back on the log, and he was laughing."

"He hasn't ought to try to be so spry at his age," said Mulkern. "He takes too many chances, and he always did!" "Rend-rock" was remembering the "candle" which was burned when only chance prevented him from rising as high as seventy-five pounds of bursting dynamite would take him.

"But it was sure up to him to run the first log into the sorting-boom, as he always had done it," insisted Mike. "He was running that log and calling for the hoorays, like he has always rolled the first log, as spry as anny man on the river. And the damn' waterlogged pulp-stick bumped the X. K. timber and off he went! But a wetting he never minded! It was because he bumped the pulp-stick when he fell! Struck over his heart! Hit a hunk of their Temiscouata peeled popple that they're flinging into the river to soak water and sink and clog the way for the honest drive!"

"But it ain't anything serious!"

"Not the tunk, maybe! But to be knocked off the king log by Temiscouata popple and hit over the heart by Temiscouata popple, it has hurt something in him which old Doc March hasn't located. It might not have bothered him so much once, but he's getting old and notional."

In his barrel-chair was Kavanagh; the barrel-chair was his favorite seat and over it was thrown a huge moose-hide, tanned with the hair. His flannel shirt was open at the neck and his sleeves were rolled up.

In front of him sat old Dr. Archaleus March on the

edge of a splint chair, wizened face expressing much concern, thin knees close together; there were those in the Toban who did say that Doctor March was really a little cracked and had originally limited his practice to veterinary work, filing and filling the teeth of woods horses. But Doctor March, in his later days, looked wise, presumed to knowledge, and always wore a plug-hat! This head-gear he was holding in the crook of his arm, in stiff pose, as he sat in front of "Old X. K." and earnestly advised that obstinate gentleman to go to bed and have hot packs on his side.

"And so that's the way to hold a plug-hat, is it?" demanded Kavanagh, to whom the advice about going to bed had become too familiar to require further notice. "Many's the time I have seen you handling it, but I was never enough interested to take special note. And so that's it! Doc, I serve notice on ye! I shall take ye along with me to that college. Ten dollars a day to you on top of all your expenses."

"I'll go because you need a physician to keep you from your reckless—"

"I'm not taking you for a physician, man! I'm taking you for sociability. I'm taking you because I want another plug-hat before my eyes all the time. I want to handle my hat so that I shall not shame the colleen. You shall drill me, Doc."

"Oh, I understand your joke, Mr. Kavanagh! It's your way of engaging a physician. I'll go!"

"And then you'll try to doctor me instead of sticking strictly to your plug-hat drill, and we shall have trouble. But you shall go! However, you have no good manners outside of your plug-hat, Doc. I shall need somebody to show me good manners, to shame me when my temper

starts, and to keep us two apart when you try to doctor me."

On a bench beside the barrel-chair sat a priest—the little Father Laflamme, curé of Ste. Agathe, mild, wistful, and smiling. Kavanagh turned to him, stifling a grunt of pain when he changed position. There was no more bluff tone of command. He entreated, with pathetic eagerness: "Will you go along, Father Pierre? Not as I said! I will quarrel with no man when I go down to see my true colleen step out with the best of 'em. But I do want somebody who can tell me my manners. I don't want to shame her. It's long since I have seen her, and I hope she has forgotten how the shaggy old dog has looked and has gone about up here in the woods. She has been with the best of 'em, you know. She mustn't be ashamed of me."

"You do your good child wrong to think that such could be," said Father Pierre, putting up reproving finger.

"But she has been seeing only ladies and gents, your Reverence. All these years away from me, and meeting the Lawd-a'mighty kind!"

"That has nothing to do with the love for the father who has made all such grand things possible for her."

"There's no man down there to put out his hand to me or give me the second look, Father Pierre. It has come to me that, outside the Toban and away from the men I have stood with, shoulder to shoulder, I'm only Old John Kavanagh. Maybe they'll laugh at me when they see me tiptoeing in amongst 'em. Anyway, I'll be awful lonesome—awful lonesome. There'll be hours, the long journey going—and the hours, waiting around till I can see my girl. And when she steps out with the best of 'em I'll need somebody near by to look at me and at her when

I give the bit of a nudge and whisper, 'There's my little girl—my colleen Clare.' And you know what girls are! She'll wonder if I have no friends if she sees me hanging my head all alone." He pointed to the tailor and his busy helpers. "I thought the duds would give me courage. But now—now"—his tones grew husky—"I ain't depending on the long-tailed coat and the varnished shoes." He put out his hand to the priest. "I need you with me, Father Pierre! I'm afraid!"

In that last word, spoken in a tone hardly above a whisper, John Kavanagh put all the wistful, woeful, wondering pathos of the new and strange mood which had taken possession of him.

"I'll be proud if you'll go, Father Pierre!"

The little priest grasped the outstretched hand and assented with a smile. "I'm proud to be chosen."

"We three! I'll do my best, your Reverence. You'll tell me my manners, I know!"

"We'll all do our best to show her that the folks of Toban love her"

Frank tears dripped upon Kavanagh's furrowed cheeks. "It was over my heart that I got the blow," he said, his hand on his breast. "I reckon it must have done something to my heart. I don't feel toward things as I used to feel. All these years I have kept Clare away—I have let Clare go her way without me. When it's too late I am wondering whether I have done right."

"It is not too late," said the priest, gently. "She will come here and we shall all be proud."

"But will she come here?" gasped the father, something like fear in his eyes. "Think what I have made her! It may break her heart to come here."

"Then you, so well entitled to rest, need stay here no

longer, but may find peace with her among those who are her friends."

Kavanagh's lips were parted and his eyes were wide, and he stared at something unseen and was silent.

"I'm afraid it is all too late," he whispered, his hand upon his side. There was wondering portent in his tone, as if he spoke with scant knowledge of his own thoughts.

The little tailor came from his corner, bearing a garment in a reverent manner, and bowed.

"It's your frock-coat, sir! The last try-on."

The old man lifted himself out of the barrel-chair and made attempt to throw his shoulders back and hold himself erect. He failed. The little tailor tried to drape the coat and accustom its folds to this new posture, and shook his head dubiously.

"Never you mind," said Kavanagh, noting this professional distress. "I was on my head-works, telling the devils what was what, when you measured me. Leave it be as it is! I'll walk up-ended once more when I see Clare."

In the frame of the broad door appeared Romeo Shank, who always frowned on his fame as the head fire-warden of the Toban and asked for reputation merely as the poet of Nubbly Tom. Mr. Shank wore a hard hat, a white collar, and his Sunday best, and there were a dozen weather-beaten men at his back who awkwardly displayed raiment which, it was plain, served them at the rare functions which called for a "doll-up."

Mr. Shank marched in, and his companions followed; they stood before John Kavanagh, frock-coated and, therefore, a new and strange personage as they stared at him.

"Well, boys!" The tones were familiar and broke the ice.

"Mr. Kavanagh, esquire, sir, this is a delegation," stated Mr. Shank.

In the past "Old X. K." might have professed profane and ironic doubt, with something to say about the hard hats. Now he set his shoulders a little more firmly into the fabric of the frock-coat and bowed.

"We know what the eighth day of June means to you, sir, and we want it to mean something to us, Mr. Kavanagh, sir! I have been asked to speak to you for all, having a name for knowing how to use words where they belong.

"There is a day which all do say will not be melancholy.
We'll go along with mirth and song and we will all be jolly.
'Twill ne'er be told when we grow old that all her friends
wa'n't there
When finest dressed amongst the best stepped forth the colleen
Clare."

John Xavier Kavanagh's face took on the baleful expression which the human visage wears when the full enormity of a proposition has been conveyed.

"A moment now, Shank! Pomes I never did understand. They go the back way to say the things that ain't so. But, by gorry! there sounds to be both truth and a threat in what ye're saying. Out with it—but no pome!"

"The drive is running free, Mr. Kavanagh, sir! Full water from bank to bank! A half-crew can chase the rear for a few days. The boys have their money and it's always hard to think of a good way to spend woods money. So we'll go at your back to wherever it is. If

you want more than five hundred of the boys, it's only for you to say the word and—"

"And now I hear right, do I? Ye mean to make an excursion to my girl's graduation?"

"That's the grand plan, sir. We pay our own bills, of course! But if you care to hire the band for us to march behind up the street to where it is—"

Kavanagh clutched at his breast and fell back into the barrel-chair and groaned so vigorously that Mr. Shank paused.

"God forgive me! God take away the words from my mouth I was about to say to ye! And in the hearing of the priest! Ye damn' fool of a pote, have ye never been to see what colleges are like where it's a thousand dollars a minute and where the Lord Gull of Argyle has to vouch before they'll put their log-mark onto the girl they roll down the bank into the world?"

"No," confessed Mr. Shank.

"Nor I, either!" was the old man's equally frank confession. "But I have the sense to guess! Father Pierre, talk to him for me. I'll take my first lesson in manners. Talk to him! I'll shame myself, else!"

Gently did the little father explain to Mr. Shank and his delegation how a parade of woodsmen and a brass band, or even an influx of too many friends, might embarrass a young woman who, doubtless, had only a limited number of invitations for Commencement at her disposal.

"There's the truth," was Kavanagh's indorsement. "Not as I would have put it, but plain enough for even a pote to understand. God's love, man! If Heaven ain't good to me, and Father Pierre always ready by to tell me my manners, I'll be shaming her myself!"

"I understand," said Mr. Shank, humbly.

"Of course that's it," murmured the men in uneven chorus.

"What we could do we were anxious to do," proceeded Mr. Shank. "But if it hadn't ought to be done we're thankful for good advice. We know how to feel right, even if we don't know how to act right, Mr. Kavanagh."

"Your hearts are right, my boys!" shouted the old man. "But your brains are not much better than mine." He beat his hand upon the table at his side. "Dumphy! Mind ye, here!" The rattle of pots in the lean-to ceased. "The jug and the pannikins!"

"No! I can see for myself! We wouldn't fit in with the grand airs down there," stated Mr. Shank, in firmer tones of conviction. "But when she steps foot upon her native heath, Mr. Kavanagh, sir—"

"Then she'll know where her true friends are, even as I know!" He struggled up from his seat. That mood that was new to him possessed him once more. He wept and did not seem to be ashamed. "Boys of mine! The flat of my hand and the edge of my tongue I have used 'em wickedly! But ye have always understood, now haven't ye?"

They assured him with jubilant voices and wet eyes.

"You shall have your band o' music when the colleen steps foot in the Toban!"

They cheered him. Mr. Shank raised his pannikin. "To the Kavanagh and his colleen! Sunshine down and back, and a safe home-coming soon!"

CHAPTER III

In the way of a little better understanding of Clare Kavanagh's nature, along with a morsel of scandal and other matters in the Marthorn family.

WHEN Clare Kavanagh was twenty, after four years at college, no one knew her well—she did not even wholly understand herself.

She was not even assured regarding the natural affection a daughter should feel for a father.

There had been no mother-love for Clare. The girl was one of those rare fruits of the autumn of matrimony—and John Kavanagh was old enough to be her grandfather. Her mother died when the child was born. Her grown-up brothers—one was drowned in the Hulling Machine Falls and the other was a roaring rake who shamed his father and killed himself with drink.

On Clare did John Kavanagh set all his love—but it was a strange, rather secret, an abashed sort of love, if so one may term it. Somehow, the old man had found it impossible to take his daughter to him in paternal intimacy. Mercenaries were her companions in her home. But the flattery of those who were paid to minister to her made empty compliments forever distasteful and infected sincerity itself with distrust and disgust.

Her father had declared that she should not be in the woods or of the woods; he had even insisted that she

spend her college vacations in travel. To be a "lady with the best of 'em," to have wisdom and elegance and his money when he was done with it, such was his ambition for her. He felt unable to express to her, face to face, his love. He had an idea that by making her what she was and leaving her his money he was expressing love better than by words.

In this manner had Clare been thrust away from exercising affection in its most natural expression. Her letters to her father were lamentable expositions of her lack of interest in him.

Even the Congressman's wife, sponsor of Clare at select Manor Verona, companion and quasi-chaperon on occasional vacation tourings, was quite in despair when it came to consideration of the girl's society prospects.

The settled conviction that everything the Congressman asked her to perform had something political about it resulted in making his wife self-conscious and so obviously unnatural as to create doubts regarding her sincerity in even commonplaces of intimacy.

Association more unfortunate there could not have been in the case of Clare Kavanagh, after her life at home with those whose contact developed in her more of contempt and suspicion than any other sentiment.

It seemed as if there was no one in the world who would distinterestedly estimate her for herself alone!

"I shall attend the Commencement, of course," said the Congressman's wife, querulously communicative to a calling friend. "Robert says it will be quite essential on account of politics. The father controls a great many votes on this side of the border.

"But I could care honestly for this girl, if she would only allow it. So handsome, Claudia! Quite the Celtic

type! Black hair and such complexion, and gray eyes! But just when you're being especially nice to her and you think she's ready to respond at last, she draws her lids straight across those eyes and you feel as if she had set the end of one of her father's pike-staffs, or whatever you call 'em, against you and was shoving you away."

For Clare, her last days at Manor Verona seemed to tip with flame all the smoldering embers of her past discontent. Dull pain became vivid torture.

She was surrounded by a fluttering, frolicking flock that was eager to be off, gaily confident of the future, avidly, zestfully seeking experience and already promised realization of dreams.

Engagement-rings, proudly displayed to others when she passed, flashed joyful gleams in her sullen eyes. Plans of tours, wonderful house parties, projects for summer joys, were canvassed in her hearing. Friends, friends—the world seemed full of friends for all except herself! Eyes brimming, cheeks burning, she locked her door and burned the most of her allowance of Commencement invitations, after she had raked her memory for her poor little list of acquaintances. Her father had written a queer, bantering letter in which he neither promised that he would come nor stated that he would remain away. What added to her shame and misery was the secret thought which all her desperately summoned loyalty could not stamp out and kill—she would not feel especial disappointment if he failed to come.

The girl's conceptions had become morbid.

There was no one of Clare Kavanagh's college associates who had shown actual hostility. On the contrary, some of them rather frankly pitied her—a sentiment which was undoubtedly more intolerable than honest enmity, as soon

as her instinctive nature was apprised. There was more or less idle wonderment how a girl whose father was "some kind of a wood-chopper" could afford the luxury of an education at Manor Verona. When it was a question of an assessment for this or that the solicitor approached her gingerly. In most cases the solicitor was Cora Marthorn, who seemed best fitted, being the daughter of a financier. And, on account of Miss Marthorn's unvarying demeanor in the business, both patronizing and apologetic, Miss Kavanagh in course of time developed a healthy and quite Toban-like hankering to slap that supercilious face.

When the matter of the class gift to the art collection of the college was canvassed it was Miss Marthorn's suggestion that the usual equal-division assessment plan be set aside in order that members could give what individual willingness prompted. "In this way," Miss Marthorn opined, "we shall be able to raise a much larger sum, I think. Some of us, by a little extra effort, can lighten what might be a burden to others; the plan is to make our class gift considerably better than any given by a class up to this time."

"Isn't that just like her!" exploded Miss Collins, who walked away from the meeting in company with Miss Kavanagh. "Probably her father told her to arrange it that way so that she can give more than anybody else for the sake of advertising the Marthorn family here."

"Phuh! Advertising the family!" volunteered Miss Harriet Tell—known better among her intimates as "Hurry-and" Tell—who walked on the other side of Miss Clare; "her brother is doing that just now, so my Bob says." Quoting her Bob apparently prompted Miss Tell to examine afresh a very handsome ring, she

"Old! You dear child! Now I honestly shouldn't tell you this! But you're such a sympathetic listener!" Miss Harriet gave a quick glance about them and then seized Clare's arm and whispered: "I have seen her! You must never lisp that I have seen her. For it must not be known that I was ever in places where she and Kenneth would naturally be together."

Perceiving that she had both shocked and mystified the quiet recluse of Manor Verona, Miss Tell appeared distinctly gratified. For a few moments she enjoyed the impression she had produced and then added: "Of course Bob and I were properly chaperoned and so it was perfectly all right for us to be there, provided nobody found us out. It was—The Hermitage!" Miss Tell whispered the name, putting deep import on it. But she failed that time to get reaction. "Never heard of The Hermitage?"

"Never," said Clare, wholly unimpressed.

"Well, you're a strange— But we won't mind! And I won't try to explain. It—it would take too long," stated Harriet, surveying this paragon of propriety with wondering gaze, and adding in her own thoughts, "Perhaps it's just as well if nobody tries to make you understand."

"I don't quite get your meaning, but it sounds like a good, quiet place," said Clare, wistfully anxious to please this new friend.

"Don't always believe in sounds," advised Miss Tell, warmly. "Bob says that when Rome howled it wasn't because Rome was being hurt anywhere. Well, I've seen her. She's a tataranta!"

"Perhaps he will bring her to Commencement. Quite naturally he will come himself."

Miss Harriet walked around in front of this ingenuous personage, surveying her with mingled emotions. "Say, Kavvy, are you trying to jolly me with your innocent *Ida stuff*?" she demanded.

Clare's gray eyes opened on this abrupt interlocutor; Miss Tell seemed to be effectually convinced by the girl's expression and disarmed of distrust.

"Now listen!" She put up her finger. "When a young man like Kenneth Marthorn motors out with a young widow to *The Hermitage*—or a place like that—party of two—it means that he is cultivating a friendship that he doesn't care to let the family in on. No, you will not see the widow at *Manor Verona*! Bob says he hopes Kenneth isn't going to make a fool of himself!"

"I am not entirely one myself, I must assure you," declared Miss Kavanagh, a little frostily. "If I seemed dense it's because I like to believe good of folks, first of all."

"But Kenneth is good, all right. He's only like the rest. Don't scowl so at me, Kavvy! My! you are so painfully proper!"

"I am not," blazed Clare.

"O-o-oh! That isn't a nice confession, after all!"

Clare did not reply.

"But I have offended you, Kavvy, and I did not mean to do so. We must clear it up."

"I am not offended—not at you!"

"But I don't want any misunderstanding, dear, between us, now that we are about to part! I insist! Tell me why you are so touchy all of a sudden!"

"If you insist, I'll tell you! It is a shame to speak of love that way! I do hope you love your young man

and that he loves you. But to mention him in the same breath in which you speak of that cad!"

"But Kenneth Marthorn is not a cad!"

"It's the only word I can think of just now!"

"But if you knew him—"

"I don't want to know him—I don't want to hear about him—or any other Marthorn. The name and the man disgust me! I hate the whole family. I'm sorry! But my temper makes me ashamed, sometimes. I'd better walk away by myself."

She stepped past Miss Harriet and hurried off.

"Well, of all the—" gasped the maiden, rebuffed. "No wonder she has never got anywhere in our class if that's the kind of a prickly periwinkle she is—and *that's* all the fit name *I* can think of!" Miss Tell made a face like an angry kitten.

When Cora Marthorn went the rounds with her subscription paper she had secured the names of nearly all the others in the class before she approached Clare.

"It has been a most wonderful response," stated Miss Marthorn, urbanely, but the air of patronage still flavored her manner. "Really, quite enough is guaranteed."

It was a plain hint which afforded Miss Kavanagh an opportunity to make her contribution as modest as her resources prompted.

Miss Marthorn's condescending effusiveness was chilled by the look Clare returned. The girl took the paper and glanced at the Marthorn subscription. With much deliberation she produced her fountain-pen and wrote the amount of her own donation; her chirography was naturally bold and she affected a broad-nibbed pen. When she finished, her "John Hancock" of a signature stood forth defiantly; the sum which she set against her

name was just double the amount pledged by the daughter of Stephen Marthorn.

The interview was in Miss Kavanagh's dormitory room; she took a check-book from a desk pigeonhole.

"But the payment need not—"

"It is somewhat of a Kavanagh peculiarity," broke in Clare, writing. "When my father gave me my check-book, years ago, he gave me some good advice about obligations."

Miss Marthorn received in her hand the check and the signed round-robin, and lifted eyebrows and voice at the same time. "But I cannot accept this!"

"The check is perfectly good," stated Miss Kavanagh. No meek model of perfect womanhood was "Old X. K.'s" colleen! Out of long repression and wounded pride and resentful sensitiveness had developed rancor—and rancor was begging for the privilege of "handing something" to the daughter of Stephen Marthorn.

"Oh, I am not questioning the check," affirmed Miss Marthorn, her words belying the expression with which she looked at the figures. "But the sum is too large."

"I did not know that any limit to contributions had been set," said Clare, coldly. "As a matter of fact, I believe it was your own suggestion that this plan be adopted in order to obtain a very generous sum."

"Yes, but this may be embarrassing," pleaded Miss Marthorn, rapidly losing self-possession.

"The amount I have given does not embarrass *me*. If you had come to me earlier," was the cutting suggestion, "the present situation might not have been so embarrassing. I shall insist!"

"I have already taken some measures in regard to the gift and its cost, and this—"

"It would have been better to take the whole class into your confidence, Miss Marthorn, wouldn't it? We should all have a say in what our money buys."

"But this will leave a surplus of so much!"

"Possibly some of the young ladies will be willing to reduce their subscriptions. Perhaps some of them have given more than they can afford. You are experienced in such matters and very tactful, Miss Marthorn! You might go to them and show them how they can be relieved." There was no mistaking the tone!

Miss Marthorn, flushing, momentarily carried out of her usual composure, opened her mouth as if to give back retort in kind. But she restrained herself and bowed. "I'm sure the whole class will be pleased by your generosity, Miss Kavanagh. As one of the class, simply for myself, I thank you."

She went away.

She left behind her a being who had been more bitterly stricken by a glance and a bow than by any words which could have been uttered. In fact, the withering thought came to Clare that she would have welcomed railing and scolding, hands on hips. She confessed to herself the bitter truth of that feeling—that hope, unconfessed and formless till then, that Cora Marthorn would thrust and parry with her, word for word, until some of the force of four years of unspoken rebelliousness might be exhausted in speech.

She flung pen and check-book into a corner of the room. She stood up and faced her panting, crimson-faced self in the cheval glass. "So that's what you are! That's what you are inside! After four years here, eh?" She leaned close to the glass and made ugly face of unutterable loathing and disgust. Deep in her throat and sink-

ing her voice to low contralto, affecting what her natural speech never contained, she spoke to the figure reflected in the mirror: "There ye stand, Ould Jawn Kavanagh's gur-rl! Thraitor to ye'self and yer father, both! Away wid ye! But where can ye go? Even the woods are too honest for the likes of ye! Yer father is too good for ye! A lady, eh?" She slapped her hand across the glowering visage in the glass. "Go on! I never want to be else than what I was born to be!" Then she turned away and lifted her arms and wailed: "O God—my God of pity! God forgive me for that lie!"

CHAPTER IV

To assist in the further and better understanding of Kenneth Marthorn, contrast may be made of his trial in his winter sanity and his test in his midsummer madness.

CLARE KAVANAGH from the breath of scandal had formed an opinion of Kenneth Marthorn which made his personality, as far as she was concerned, as hopeless a wreck as was Humpty Dumpty after the tumble from the wall.

Miss Tell, though claiming friendly acquaintanceship with the young man, evidently had in her mind a picture of the idle scion of a rich man.

But, as hydraulic engineer-in-chief, Kenneth had built the penstocks and installed the turbines in the new Broad Falls paper-mill of the Great Temiscouata Company; and he did not owe his job to his father's influence, either! He had gone in for engineering because he liked that kind of work. The Temiscouata took him on because he proved that he could make good. He was not a bit quixotic, that young man. He accepted his allowance from his father just the same—even "jacked" the figures adroitly and persistently whenever the colonel's good nature gave opportunity, and banked the sums intact against the days of relaxation in the city when there was interim between the blue-overalls jobs.

It is good business to build wheel-pits and penstocks

and install turbines in the winter-time when the drougthy cold holds back the waters. But to be down in those pits among frozen earth-clods or fumbling in bitter weather with transit, level, or such like, and nothing to look forward to except meals from the oilcloth-covered tables of a mill boarding-house and a dip into a novel before bunk-time at nine o'clock—that is paying a heavy price to good business, when a man is young!

Then glorious, warming, rosy, trilling, thrilling spring! Spring, the town, the club—and all the money in the bank!

Young Mr. Marthorn found that he was keeping a sort of debit-and-credit account with himself. During his periodical terms of banishment to the desert he devised plans and pondered possibilities and piled up his zest for enjoyment, just as he stored his money.

Therefore, after watching the great turbines begin, grumbling and growling, their unending toil, Kenneth Marthorn faced toward his holiday, glad that he was alive in the budding spring! Nominally he lived in the home mansion; actually he lived at the club. Colonel Marthorn did not question or discountenance that arrangement; the young man was absent so much on his tours of duty that it would have seemed odd to have him constantly at home. Nor did the colonel question any of his son's actions, for, so far as all outward appearance went, they were merely mild escapades marked by high spirits and were not questionable adventures associated with low morals. Furthermore, Colonel Marthorn secretly believed in the *laissez-faire* doctrine in the management of a son who had shown so much ability in making a way for himself in the business world; the colonel was in no mood to see too much!

Mrs. Irma Sturtevant met young Mr. Marthorn for the first time at the Waldheim Country Club.

There seemed to be nobody to do much of any talking about Mrs. Sturtevant. She did mighty little of it, herself—regarding herself. It was a toss-up between her and Kenneth Marthorn, in their association, which one was less illuminating in regard to personal matters. Both of them seemed to prefer to build theories about the other and to let prosaic facts alone. Outwardly, Mrs. Sturtevant was quite enough to occupy the mind of an ordinary man without any bothersome delving into matters which she might be hiding behind her exquisite exterior. She announced herself without words as young and very pretty, jolly, temperamentally fond of excitement and pleasure, probably rich, else her jewels lied. The question of the person who announced her as a widow or affirmed anything as to her social standing did not appear to be a matter of special interest on the part of anybody.

On the first occasion they met she had a wonderfully good time with Kenneth Marthorn. Better time, apparently, next meeting!

And then, because the gossips began to look that way with the frank and constant stare of folks trying to tell time by the town clock, there was not quite so much of the open-faced kind of intimacy between young Mr. Marthorn and the widow.

One day Stephen Marthorn, though addicted solely to limousines, took a whole lot of interest in a chummy roadster, seeing it pass him on the Carwich Boulevard; it was going in the same direction as his car and, therefore, he had considerable opportunity to study its contents as it drew on ahead of him.

In one portion of the contents he felt a natural interest—the interest of a father in a son. In another section of contents he felt a suddenly acquired interest because the profile of the veiled face was charmingly alluring. The considerably abused phrase, “tête-à-tête,” here was perfectly justified; the brown cap was almost touching the gray toque. The son’s absorption was so complete that he had not noticed, apparently, the number of the paternal car, and the colonel knew that his son on most occasions was particularly observant—it was a part of his engineer’s training. Therefore, Colonel Marthorn’s deductive mind drew disquieting conclusions.

He tried to conceal his uneasiness the next time he found an opportunity to have a few words with Kenneth. He made jesting reference to the fact that his own son did not seem to care to recognize the father in public any more. Then the colonel revealed his uneasiness. Instead of asking Kenneth who the girl was he inquired whose daughter she was.

“I haven’t the least idea,” was the son’s prompt confession.

The father twitched gray eyebrows by means of a rebuking grimace.

“I never thought to ask.”

“But that’s the first and most natural thing to know, sir!”

“The most natural thing to find out in this case would be something definite about the husband. But I haven’t even bothered about that!”

“A husband! Are you running around—”

“Oh no! She’s a widow. At least, I’m quite sure she is.”

“And you don’t *know* for sure?”

"Impertinent questions about family matters are not in good form, father. I myself won't endure them from anybody. I treat other folks accordingly."

"There are other things not good form besides impertinent questions, my boy. I hope I need not be more specific."

"No, it isn't necessary. Two or three of my meddling friends have tried to be so, and trouble has resulted."

"You do not class me with what you call 'meddling friends,' do you, sir?"

"Certainly not, father! I put you on a high elevation—a very high elevation. I shall be truly shocked if you descend."

"Descend? Descend how?"

"Why, by jumping at conclusions which only vulgar minds entertain. You probably didn't mean it at all, but it sounded rather improper. Both you and I are above such ideas. I have met a charming good fellow. Understand? A good fellow! That's our mutual attitude. We're chumming around a bit."

"But by your own statement, boy, somebody has seen fit to remonstrate with you! If that's the case, if it's looked on in that light, you stand in a way to have your good name compromised."

"Just take a second look, father! This is Kenneth! It isn't Cora!"

"Here! Here! Don't forget yourself, sir! I would never have occasion to talk that way to your sister."

"I am as impeccable as she in my own Sir Galahad fashion," drawled young Mr. Marthorn, flooding his disarming smile upon his scowling father.

Then young Mr. Marthorn stood up straight before his father. "I deliberately chose the work I am in, even

though it imposes a penance every time I go out on a job. As I am now situated, I can make up in some measure for the penitential days, dad."

"How about some adventuress hooking you before you wake up?"

"Meaning, no doubt, threatening possibilities in the case of the widow?" queried the son, sweetly.

"Let us call the lady by her name! What *is* her name? Or has your respect for good form not led you as far as the impertinence of seeking to know her name?"

"Irma Sturtevant—*with* the Mrs."

"My son, the fact that you have not taken care that your family should know this lady makes me uneasy. I put you on your honor to protect the name of your family and your own future. I hold you responsible, sir! Remember that!"

"I'll accept the responsibility, father."

"Then it's man's word between us, my boy! And I trust to your good, true common sense even more than to your promise."

After that, after the hand-grasp, after what seemed to be compact based on the essentials of a good understanding, Colonel Marthorn tactfully turned his back on the amusements chosen for his son's period of relaxation in the spring and dawning summer. Having rather stilted delicacy in the matter of espionage, the colonel rebuffed with some tartness certain well-meaning meddlers who came to him with reports concerning dinners, dancing, dalliance, and devotion.

In this tale it was necessary to make short work of the epic of a drive.

Equally short work must be made of the idyl of a courtship.

There is every reason to believe that Kenneth Marthorn did not intend it as a courtship. It was comradeship in full measure from the beginning of the affair. But there was more of fellowship than philandering. It was because their respective attitudes so effectually disarmed their intimacy of the natural attributes of what folks term "serious intentions" that the climax left both of them floundering, stricken, and amazed, in a wreck of excellent resolutions.

The physiologists tell us there is a blind spot in every eye.

The yogis assert that there is on every human body a point of no sensation, where the physical is bonded with the psychic.

And every poor, human creature, possessing no expert knowledge, has found that in affairs there are moments of utter blindness and absolute numbness in regard to consequences.

One night, after a dinner, Kenneth Marthorn and Irma Sturtevant motored far enough so that state lines and legal jurisdiction could not hamper their intent, and were married.

There may have been a bubble too much of wine; words and glances from others might have pricked the suddenly flaming chivalry of the young man; the spur of rivalry, when other eyes looked on her covetously, may have hurried him to display to the envious the pride of the possessor. And the June night, when they were on the broad highway in the hurrying car, undoubtedly had its full effect in the adventure of midsummer madness.

The girl wildly objected—and then consented with a hysterical fervor which rather astonished him while it delighted him. "But don't allow me to think! Hurry! Don't let me think!" she pleaded, sobs choking her.

In endeavoring to keep her from thinking he kept himself from any thoughts which might check his ardor.

They found haven in a wayside inn, a neat and quiet mansion, with broad porticoes and cool rooms and discreet service by master and mistress in person. There were vines at the windows to shield them from the stare of the big June moon. There was the soft patter of the falling waters of a stream near by, and the murmur of doves served as epithalamium.

While he was at the window, drinking in the fragrance of the dewy night, building in his thoughts, as best he could, a fabric of explanation for his projected message to his father, his bride came and kneeled beside him, weeping and confessing. After removing her hat, she had been surveying him, hesitating.

"You will loathe me! I have been a fool."

"So have I. But I am glad of it, my wife! We will both be dear fools for each other's sake."

"I don't dare to tell you, after all!"

He tried to lift her up, but she resisted and hid her face against him. "Tell me what?"

Her distress was so pitifully intense that his wonderment became apprehension. He pressed her with questions for many minutes before he was able to extort the truth from her.

"I am married!" she cried, at last.

"Why, I know that! Would we be here if you were not?"

"But I am married to somebody else—before I was married to you."

His understanding refused to reach to what she was trying to convey. "But I know you were a widow!"

"My husband is alive—my real husband."

"Divorced?" he gasped.

"No, no! Oh, understand, please! Don't make me talk! I'm choking! I shall die!"

"You mean to tell me that you are a married woman, not separated from your husband?"

She knocked her forehead against his knee.

"Good God! And this—"

"I couldn't help it! I could not resist! I was mad! He is an old man, Kenneth! I married him because he is rich. He lets me do just as I want to. He lets me come and go as I like. He is a good old man. But it was never right—it wasn't right. He knew it! He has indulged me in everything."

He put her from him, unclasping her arms, and went to a chair and sat down. He was weak and white. She started to crawl to him on her knees, but he put up a protesting hand.

"Listen, Kenneth! He has told me I would find somebody I would love. He has been afraid of it! Yes, and he has so much sympathy for me! You must go to him and tell him about it. He will forgive us."

His face revealed that the prospect did not hold out any grand hopes. Stupefaction—utter misery—the two emotions twisted his features.

"He will let me have a divorce when he understands. That will be the best way, dear. It will come out all right. He won't make any trouble for us. 'Whatever you want in this world to make you happy I will give you,' is what he has always told me."

The woman had actually ceased weeping. Her face lighted up at the thoughts which came to her, after the agony of her confession. "We can be so happy together just as soon as it's all straightened out."

He began to wonder whether this woman had any sense of honor or conception of moral obliquity.

"Straightened out!" he shouted. "What is the matter with you? You're talking as if you had simply run away from a father instead of betraying a husband!"

"He is just the same as my father! He has always indulged me, I tell you. He'll overlook it!"

"But the law can't overlook it! Good Heaven! You have committed bigamy! We're headed for state prison, the both of us!"

"Oh, can it be made out as bad as that—just forgetting ourselves?" she asked, wistfully, the enormity of the offense seeming to strike no echo within her. "But we won't say a word till we see Horace. I'll go with you! Yes, I'll go. He'll listen to anything I say."

He groaned and set his fingers into his hair, his elbows on his knees.

"We must make the best of it," she urged. "True love will find a way."

The banal platitude and the bland tone in which she uttered it made him furious. He rose and kicked the unoffending chair about the room.

"You mustn't lose your head, dear," she protested. "I know you can arrange everything if you keep cool! You were so masterful last evening. I simply had to do as you said. You made me forget everything!"

"Don't you lay it to me—your forgetting that you are a married woman. I say, what's the matter with you? Don't you know a damnably horrible scrape when your nose is right in it?"

"Don't be vulgar!"

He stood over her and glared down into her face, wearing an expression which fitted a padded cell rather

than a bridal chamber. In that tense moment, unwittingly without question, she let fall a remark that, for him, though he could hardly understand just why, pricked the swollen tragedy of the situation.

"Horace lives in Omaha," she said. "You know! The man with his name on all the lard-pails!"

Young Marthorn picked up the overturned chair and sat down in it.

He no longer felt like raving. He looked at her for a long time. He began to understand that this comradely person who had so constantly laughed her way with him through all their adventures in intimacy had been covering shallowness with that laugh. Her very naïvété in feeling secure because she was the pet of an old man gave him better understanding of her nature than he had secured in all the weeks past. It was plain to him that he had a child on his hands, to protect from her own rash blunder-headedness.

"Do you begin to realize what a mess this is?" he demanded, controlling his temper.

"I suppose it is what you say it is! You know better than I. Perhaps if you're so sorry we'd better say nothing and—"

"Say nothing! Things like this get into the newspapers. Our names are on record in that special license."

"Horace never reads anything, only the market news."

"Oh, damnation! Wake up! I hope your husband is as good and as reasonable a man as you say he is."

"You'll find him just as I say. There can be a divorce and—"

"We'll not discuss that point, Mrs. Sturtevant! Will you kindly put on your hat? We're going to start on our wedding journey."

She confronted his gaze, understood the new meaning in his eyes, rose from her knees, and went to the dresser where her hat lay.

"A wedding journey!" she ventured to suggest, after a long silence. She was adjusting her veil.

"Yes, to Omaha," he said, dryly.

CHAPTER V

Although Abner Kezar entertains fond hopes regarding the disposal of John Kavanagh's daughter, Donald Kezar has questionable ideas in regard to the immediate use of Kavanagh's money.

THAT June morning was truly all that a June morning ought to be; it breathed the spirit of promise.

Robins and roses and puffs of breeze and the earliest butterflies were doing their cheering bits at the open windows of Kavanagh's house.

The old man felt the spirit of promise; he was looking forward to something with honest ardor.

Dumphy prepared himself to be valet, taking the same meticulous care of his person as when he prepared to make short-cake or waffles. He scrubbed hands and arms with sand-soap and put on a polish with a rough towel. Being fair and plump, Dumphy looked clean enough to handle a bride's trousseau.

"Ye'll do," said "Old X. K.," "but mind ye, carefully, man!"

And Dumphy brought forth the sacred garments, and even the robins stopped hunting for worms and perched by the windows to see.

Ste. Agathe has no especial contour as a village; when Nature dumped down an apronful of ledges and boulders and hillocks beside Tulandic Falls she plainly did not

intend that man should come along and spoil the general effect by checker-board lay-out of houses. Men took the hint and builded accordingly as they found flat places and enough soil in which to dig a cellar. Therefore the little houses are scattered around, and thrusting up from them are a few cardinal points, here itemized:

On one commanding hillock, the mansion of John Xavier Kavanagh, with its log-walled ell; the mansion for show and for the women-folks—when there were women-folks; the ell for John Kavanagh's own contentment and comfort.

At the other end of the village, on another commanding hillock, the parish church and the cottage of Father Pierre Laflamme, and, on the slope beyond, the high cross above the graves.

In the middle of a little huddle of stores the barren hulk of the tavern with its gambrel roof and weather-beaten sides speckled with dirty windows.

A little drab railroad station, with a battered bumper beside it, yawning at a drunken angle and marking the end of the lazy, rusty-railed branch line.

At the foot of John Kavanagh's hillock, the only brick-walled building in the village—John Kavanagh's head office. To one who understood, its vivid red suggested what it was—the heart of the village; the money which flowed out of its door was the life-blood of the place.

Within, Abner Kezar had his face to his figures and his back to the June morning. Perhaps because he had so persistently turned his back to the sunlight all his life it had come about that his shoulders were permanently warped. But those shoulders bent daily and persistently above the business of John Kavanagh.

He was a man of figures. As to cash, accounts, stump-

"I wouldn't bother my head about him, Abner. He can pick and choose, a boy like he is! He need not put up with the winnowings!"

"You think he is good enough for the best, do you, John?"

"Oh yes! Oh yes! For the best!"

Kezar opened his mouth, but Kavanagh went right on:

"But I may say, perhaps, for the best in these parts who are looking for a strapping boy, who are not asking for a lot of brains."

"But Donald is not a fool, John!"

"No, nor am I, nor are you! As he stands—as she stands—he would make a fine husband for Clare—yes, even for Clare."

Abner Kezar gasped for breath and twisted in his chair.

"But that's only if she is to stay as she is. When she has been made a fine lady it will be different."

"But they are not any good, none of 'em, down where she is going," squeaked Kezar. "They're honest and true up here in the woods! They are—"

"Most of 'em rough-necked renegades, and I've got some of the traits myself, Abner. Once in a while a fine, strapping boy like your Donald! But he hasn't had his fling as yet! And the world is full of fine gentlemen with brains, and my Clare is a good girl and deserves one of 'em. So she's going away to be made a lady of! And after she has been made a lady of—well, then we'll see!"

"Perhaps she will come home and have the sense to find somebody here," said Kezar, testing his master's attitude toward a second choice as far as he dared.

"That shall be the business of Clare—that is, if she shows that her education has given her plenty of good

sense; and if it hasn't given her good sense, which God forbid, she will need a keeper instead of a husband, and mayhap I can find the right man for the two jobs "

Four years later, with the June sun at his back, Kezar was signing checks, ready for the scrawling counter-signature of the master, and was wondering what the home-coming of Clare Kavanagh might signify in the matter of his hopes. There was present something to give point to his thoughts—whenever he raised his eyes from his task he saw Donald Kezar sitting in the big chair reserved for the master. But the chair was not too good for the grandson.

Kavanagh, so the appearance of Donald Kezar testified, had a good eye for the physical excellence of men. The young man was in corduroy riding-dress, and his horse, with dragging bridle-rein, was dozing and blinking at the corner of the brick office in the sun. Kezar had ridden in that morning from the Portage Beaulieu—he called it "Potash Bolya" when his grandfather made inquiry.

From under wrinkled eyelids which were cocked like little tents the old man's buttons of eyes surveyed his grandson's face. There is a certain kind of meek, sad, silent reproach which stings more sharply than acrid speech when conscience offers abraded surface. Young Kezar endured the gaze for a few moments, then drove hasty hand into his coat's side pocket and pulled out a crumpled ball of paper money. It made a big handful, crowding his fist, ends of bills sticking between his fingers. There was almost menace in the manner in which he shook that fist at his grandfather.

"Good God! I don't always lose when I sit into a game at Old Joel's!"

Abner Kezar winced. Tone and demeanor were insultingly cruel.

"Furthermore, it's a place where I find men I'm doing business with," stated the young man, exculpating himself. "It's a good place to do business."

"But doing it over a bottle—it isn't the right way in these days, my boy!" It was only gentle protest.

"It's all right if you've got the bottle on your side against the other fellow. For instance, I've nailed Tom Wallin for his cut of hackmatack sleepers." He jumped out of his chair, strode across to his grandfather, and shoved a paper into his hand. The paper was stained and the signature was wavery, but the writing gave a legal option. "Pretty drunk, and he slopped the whisky," explained young Kezar. "But look at the price!"

"Good! Good! You're a shrewd buyer, Don! I'm proud of you!" The old man rubbed forefinger against thumb.

"It's a twenty-four-hour option and it's cash, you see. It had to be nailed that way, to make it work. I've got to get back there to-day with the check before he sobers up."

"I haven't the money, Donald," faltered the old man. "The ship-knees proposition—the popple contracts! I have pulled my balance 'way down!"

"We must get the money! We can't afford to let this chance slip!"

Young Kezar's eyes showed the splotchy red of a sleepless night, and when he shoved forward his face and exhaled the dead odors of liquor the grandfather's wizened features puckered into new ridges.

"I don't know where to get it—in such a hurry."

"Borrow from Old X. K."

"But I don't like to let him know that I am in such

big operations outside his concerns. You have really dragged me in a little deeper than we reckoned on, Don. And those losses—"

"Here's our chance to make up for some of the losses." He flipped impatient finger against the paper which his grandfather was holding.

"In a few days I'd be able to cash in on some of the popple contracts with the Temiscouata folks—they're short on account of the hang-up—and then—"

"Then, blah-h-h!" snarled the grandson. "Blast it! Can't you *see* how I'm pulling this stuff on Wallin? I've been taking him out to play—and furnished the playthings. I have left two girls on the job, pouring drinks for him. I've got to get back, I say!"

"O Lord! Good Lord!" whined old Kezar. "It isn't the way to do business! Girls!"

"Yes, girls! I don't have any trouble in finding plenty of jolly little helpers up in these parts. I say, it's all right! You've got to get at some of these fellows in the right way in order to do business with 'em."

"The money in your pocket—you seem to have—"

"You don't think that I sat into the game at Old Joel's and cleaned up enough to handle the Wallin hack-matack cut, do you? It's only a wad of piker stuff—ones and twos. Business—to business, gran'dad! Inside of ten days, either in Halifax or Montreal, I can turn the thing over and have the cash in my fist!"

"But I haven't the cash in *my* fist," persisted the old man, twisting on his stool.

The young man waited a little while and then he tapped finger on one of the checks which the man of figures had been making out. He winked at the grandfather.

"God-a-mercy, boy, I can't do a thing like that!"

"I know all about what the system is in this office! I have seen Old X. K. countersign your checks. He'll never question, never look to see just what it is. There are a dozen others. You know he won't ask questions."

"No, but that isn't—"

"And if you think he might ask questions, all you need to do is hand me one of those indelible pencils. 'O. K., X. K.'—it's easy made. Now don't look at me like that! This is no gamble or steal! We're dealing with hackmatack sleepers, not stocks! The money comes back into one hand almost while you're passing it out with the other."

"But it's betraying—"

"It's a little short cut for our own sake—and you know just how many short cuts John Kavanagh himself has made in his day. If you can't do a little turn for the two of us, after all my work in this matter, I'll feel like tearing up that option and going straight to hell."

The threat intimidated the grandfather; he cowered and looked up at the big fellow. "Oh, my boy, I have been afraid that you have been headed that way! I have worried so much. That Portage—it isn't good for you. And I have heard stories about other places. I don't want to believe them."

"Pay no attention to what the gossips say. Half the time it's jealousy about a girl or something like that."

The old man beat his hands on the desk. "Oh, there must be no more gossip—no more girls, Donald! There must be no more doing business as you have done it with Wallin! Donald!" he whispered, eagerly, his eyes shining. "John Kavanagh's girl is coming home from her school."

"Yes, I heard she was." The young man displayed no enthusiasm.

"But I told you what he said—what he said years ago about you."

"It never sounded very encouraging to me!"

"But it was a lot for John Kavanagh to say about any man. And there's the girl to reckon with, now that she is coming home. Listen, Donald!" He snapped his head from side to side like a frightened bird reassuring itself. He spoke in a lower whisper. "It has all meant so much to me—it has been my dream for you—I have thought so long about it that I have played the sneak. Yes, I have! I confess! But I'll tell you so that you may know how hard I have tried to help! When Kavanagh has been up-country I have opened her letters before I sent 'em along to him! There they were, in the mail! They tempted me! If she had picked one of the gents, as he had hoped, she would be writing to John about him, eh? I couldn't help wanting to find out—to make sure! But she has never mentioned a man, Donald. Not a man! She's coming back here." He was panting with haste and eagerness. "I have felt that she was meant for you. She always liked to talk with you. You remember she did. If you go after her now, you can get her! But you've got to go after her right. You've got to be right yourself. All this gossip—"

"I'm not so damnably sure that I want to go after her," broke in the young man, and then he was able to go on with his depreciation of Clare because the little old man, aghast on his stool, could not get back his voice. "I have let you talk on about her in the past because I didn't take much interest, one way or the other. But I know what she must be by this time. Those schools do it to 'em!"

"And you won't try to get her?" pleaded the grandfather, tremulously.

"Let's wait till she lands here. I'll see what she's like," loftily answered the bravo among the border beauties.

"But unless you are careful—discreet! If she hears the gossip! Oh, Donald, I know you are not what their slanderous tongues say you are. I don't believe it of my boy! A young man must have his fun. But no more! Oh, I beg that you'll let her see you as you really are—your own best self! You will, eh?"

Young Kezar meditated, giving his grandfather full stare. "I'll tell you what I'll do, gran'dad! We'll make sort of a gamble of it, the two of us. Will you come half-way with me?"

"I'll help. I'll do all I can. It's my dream!"

"Well, I'll lay off the Rovin' Robbie stuff, such as it has been. I give you my word on it. It's quite a promise, too, for a man of my age with as many friends as I have in these parts. Now I'm not going to ask much of anything of you for your part."

"But I want to do all I can!"

Again young Kezar tapped finger on one of the checks. "All you've got to do is to slip that deal over, as I have suggested. Then I'll have a few thousands loose in my pockets when I am called on to do the grand before the Lady Clare."

"I can't!"

The grandson tossed his arms over his head and snapped his fingers. "Oh, very well! I'll go back to Portage Beaulieu and see how the girls are coming on with Tom Wallin." He started to walk out.

"You say you are not asking me for much! I have

already been a sneak for your sake, Donald. Now you are asking me to steal."

"You are giving a mere little whirl in finance a big name, gran'dad!"

"I'll be a thief until that money is turned back!"

"Well, *I'll* be something that won't smell nice under the nose of the Lady Clare when she blows into the Toban. All right! Let it stand that way!" Again he started on his retreat.

He was outside, untwisting a stirrup strap and getting ready to mount, when his grandfather thrust his head out of the nearest window; the seamed face was gray. "Wait, boy! Wait a moment!"

"It isn't a matter that can wait."

"I only ask you to wait till I can steady my hands. I'll—" He did not dare to put in words what he proposed to do; he nodded his head.

"You're making too much of a stew over what's merely a minor thing, gran'dad," stated young Kezar, coming to the window. "He'll never know it has been done; it's only ten days. When are you going to slip those checks to him for the O. K.?"

"I'm going up to the house right away. This is the day he starts down-country."

"Oh yes! 'To see Clare step out with the best of 'em! They're singing that around here nowadays."

"It's a terrible thing! It's a terrible thing!" moaned the old man. Alternately he stroked one hand with the other as if the hands were something apart from him, frightened creatures whom he strove to quiet.

"Get your nerve! Keep it with you! I'll go along up to the house with you. You need a good backer. Going to see his daughter! Why, gran'dad, there never was a

better time to put over a little play of this kind! He's so busy thinking of his trip he'll never notice whether the things you hand him are checks or cookies. Get your nerve, I say! There's nothing to it!"

"There's shame to it! Guilt and shame to it!" muttered the man of figures, hobbling back to his desk.

He steadied himself and wrote, the passion of his hopes for his grandson forcing him to an act which smeared with the red seal of betrayal the honor of long years of service. But between the two compelling forces, impulse of business integrity and spur of family loyalty, he had fallen victim to the dominating presence of his grandson, backed by that threat to return to ways which would wreck all the fond hopes the old man had cuddled through many years.

They walked up the hill to Kavanagh's house, the young man leading the horse.

"You're not going to commit a murder! Smooth out your face!"

But the old man moaned as he limped along. Father Pierre Laflamme overtook them before they reached the top of the hill, for their progress was slow on account of the grandfather's infirmity. The little priest carried a satchel and his shoes had a shine which flashed back the rays of the bright sun, and he dabbed at his forehead with a handkerchief which he had not yet ventured to unfold, so perfectly had it been laundered by the pains of Dame Barbe, vigilant and domineering keeper of his house.

Father Pierre usually went about with his dusty cassock flapping at his heels. His black coat and his new hat, the satchel, and his air of wistful, rather apprehensive, suppressed excitement attracted young Kezar's patronizing attention.

"Going far?" There was a trace of insolence in the question.

"It will be far for me, because I have been so long in this village I have almost forgotten how the world outside appears. But I go with much joy. It is a fine compliment, my son, to be asked to go with him to see a good daughter receive her honors." The priest did not name persons or occasion; for him, the importance of the affair made particulars unnecessary.

"I suppose the schools make fine ladies of 'em!"

"Truly yes, my son!"

"How about spoiling 'em?"

"It is not possible that a grand education would spoil a girl like Clare Kavanagh."

"The Toban is good enough for me and it's good enough for you, Father Laflamme. But she'll probably come back here with her nose in the air, all high and mighty."

"She will know much, and that will be good for all of us," declared the priest. "It may be that all this will seem too little for her, after knowing the wide world. But she may find her duty to lie here. With education, she can take some of the burden from her father."

"Keep his books for him?" queried the young man, wrinkling his nose with a sneer. "My grandfather does that better than anybody else! Help Old X. K. boss a logging-crew and get down the drive? Fine place for a girl!"

Kezar's tone was truculent and the little priest blinked, not understanding this heat. The young man himself was not exactly sure what these new emotions of his were. A sullen resentment was stirring in him, directed against what he felt must be the new personality of this girl.

So the three of them marched into the big room where John Kavanagh stood erect, receiving the last touches from the reverent hands of his man Dumphy.

Close observer, Dr. Archaleus March, plug-hat in the hook of his arm, was superintending the tying of the scarf.

"Damn a dicky!" barked Kavanagh, twisting his neck, chin held high. Then he lowered his gaze upon his visitors. "Your pardon for that word, Father Pierre, and the top o' the morning and the smiles of the angels for ye! But ye see me doing penance because of the unholy joy I have always got out of a flannel shirt! And, as I hear it, nobody ever got to be a saint by taking his comfort. Ye're well come, and we'll soon be gone. Look ye, Dumphy! That's not a snubbing-warp ye're handling!"

"Puff it up, man! Puff it up!" directed the doctor. "Not so tight!"

"Sure and I never helped to tog a dude before," grumbled Dumphy.

"It isn't me ye're calling a dude, is it?" demanded the master.

"No, sir! Not when I'm standing wit'in the reach of yer paw, like I'm standing now, sir!" He finished his task as hastily as possible and stepped back.

Kavanagh surveyed himself at full length as best he could; three mirrors were stacked one on top of the other against the log wall.

"Abner, it's a shame ye should not know for once in your life the glory of wearing a tail coat! But, with your up-and-down legs, ye'd be everlastingly stepping on the tails," he added, with brutal disregard of his factor's feelings. "Ye can look at me and see how well I feel,

Even the pain of the tunk of their damn' popple has gone since I put on these clothes. Who is the old spider who sits in the middle of their web in New York? Oh yes! Old Marthorn! I could put one foot ahead of t'other and say a word to him, me with these duds on! And Donald! I'm sorry now, boy, that I didn't think of you to take along, if *you'd* wear a tail coat with me. Ye'd look as grand as any of 'em down there, for ye have the build!"

"I'd do 'most anything to please you, sir, but I reckon I'd balk at that kind of a suit. Oh, it's all right for you, sir! I didn't mean it that way!" The grandfather looked relieved when Donald assumed a tone of deference. "It's due to Miss Clare to show her all honors. I'd have gone and been glad. But I'll be on hand with my best word when she comes home!"

"The right talk, boy! The right talk!" In his joy of anticipation, seeing that the mirrors gave complimentary evidence of the excellence of his apparel, he warmed a bit to the young man. "Yes, she's coming home! I don't know what's in her *mind*, boy! There may be something big there. But you're a lad who can be big in her *eyes* when she comes back here, if you mind your ways and look your best. What was the talk between us, Abner, years ago? I forget! But no matter. She is good enough for the best of 'em, but she shall make her own pick! I can trust her good sense."

Kezar patted his grandson's arm. "The Kavanagh in her won't let her be fooled, John! And she doesn't forget her friends, any more than you do. She will be glad to be back here!"

"There'll be merrymakings, I promise ye that! Abner, I order you now to send for a brass band against the day

of our coming home. That is, if I have any money left in the bank after I put my mark on those checks."

He pointed to the papers in his agent's hand, and his sudden reference and its suggestiveness in the case of a guilty conscience made Kezar tremble in spite of his best efforts.

"Hand 'em over, man! Business to-day shall be done in a hurry."

Kezar did not go to him promptly, therefore Kavanagh stepped forward and snatched the checks from the old man's unwilling hand. "You old kangaroo," snapped the master, jocosely, "you jump hard enough on your good leg after money that's coming in! Don't be too slow when it's a case of money going out, not on a day like this!"

When he sat down at his table he was taking more interest in the disposal of the tails of his frock-coat than in the details of business. Without scrutinizing the checks, he scrawled the countersign letters across the signature of Abner Kezar and left the scattered checks to be gathered up by the old man, who hastily scrabbled them together under the glistening eyes of the grandson.

A locomotive whistle squawked staccato blasts. It was the down-train's half-hour warning.

Kavanagh turned his attention wholly to his final preparations.

"Slip me the check," advised Donald. "It's safe. He isn't looking. I want to get back to Wallin."

He flicked the paper from the withered hand which held it forth; he hastily jammed it into his coat pocket. "Mr. Kavanagh," he called, "if it wasn't for a business deal I have on, I'd wait and help give you a send-off at the train."

"I can do well without any send-off, and I'm glad to note that you put business ahead of foolishness, boy! On your way!"

"I hope you'll have a fine journey, sir! And if it comes into your mind, I wish you'd present my respectful regards to Miss Clare."

"There!" growled young Kezar in his grandfather's ear, after Kavanagh had expressed himself cordially, "that shows that I know how to operate! So don't worry any more about *me*!" He hurried out, mounted his horse, and galloped away.

A few moments later, with Dumphy at his heels, carrying a heavy valise, John Kavanagh stepped to the door of his house and stopped there, looking down the hill toward the railroad station. Along the lane there were scattered groups, and the little platform at the station was pretty well crowded.

"A nosey pack, that's the style of 'em in this village," said Kavanagh to the priest at his side. He spoke irritably. "Look at 'em! Underfoot like quillpigs in a back-lot carrot-patch. Why ain't they all about their own business?" He took off the silk hat which he had gingerly adjusted before the mirror.

"It's to do you a bit of honor," explained Doctor March. "Romeo Shank asked me about it and I told him it would show respect."

"Ye did, did ye? Ye're a meddling blackguard! I don't expect a pote to know anything, but I thought *you* had a little common sense of your own. I'm of a mind not to take you along, for fear you'll be getting me into worse scrapes."

"I'll take part of the blame, if blame there is," put in the little priest, deprecatingly. "I told Basil L'Abbé

and a few others that you would not be offended if they assembled to bid you God-speed. I told them that to comfort them; they were a bit afraid."

"Then I'll not put the lie into a good priest's mouth!" He hesitated a little while. Suddenly he gave the silk hat into the keeping of Dumphy. "See that ye mind it well! If ye rough it I'll give ye ten whangs with a bind-chain, man!"

"I'll not carry it! I never had me hands on one!" wailed Dumphy.

"It's in your hand now, you fool! If you leave your hand off it I'll make you wear it on your head to the station. And after that they'll laugh you out of the Toban!" That remark afforded indirect but illuminating comment on the state of John Kavanagh's own mind in regard to that head-gear as a display in the Toban; also his rebelliousness in the matter of a crowd to see him off.

"But you're not going to walk down bareheaded!" protested the doctor.

"I have a good thatch on my head," said the old man, scruffing up his mane. "But you'd better keep the snuffer on your old bald pate for fear the sun will hatch it."

Therefore "Old X. K." walked to the train uncovered. "It's too hot to-day for that kind of a hat," he lied to the priest. "Anyway, I'll get used to wearing it when I'm down where they don't know me so well. Ay-oh, Father Pierre, it's all so that she won't be ashamed of the old man. We'll mind our manners and do our best!"

CHAPTER VI

John Kavanagh, on his journey of discovery, finds a woman grown from a child; and he is sure that he has found joy, love, and peace.

A TELEGRAM apprised Clare that her father would be present at her graduation. It was merely curt notification and gave her no hint as to when he would arrive. In spite of her best efforts at control of her feelings, she was conscious of a twinge of irritation. She felt that she would like to inspect him before he appeared in the select atmosphere of Manor Verona; it came nigh being anxious determination to head him off.

Therefore, the girl's mood was not that of fond anticipation while she waited in her room on the forenoon of the great day. In upon her came rushing Miss "Hurry-and" Tell, a sort of composite of an exclamation-point and a bomb with sizzling fuse attached.

Miss Kavanagh knew perfectly well that only exceptional circumstances had brought Miss Tell as a caller. Naturally, fears suggested it must be as *avant-courier* of the impossible John Kavanagh, blunderingly asking for a daughter in the select purlieus of Manor Verona. Clare's heart sank and her soul sighed!

"Where is he?" she asked, apprehensively

Miss Tell's eyes and mouth had been opened to their widest extent, but she did manage to exhibit a little extra

astonishment. "Do you mean to tell me you know about it?" In Miss Tell's mind there was only one "he" and only one topic for the mouth of world speech at that moment.

Clare Kavanagh, in her anxiety, had only one thought of her own.

"How, in the name of mercy and the angels, did you ever come to know anything about it?" demanded Miss Tell. "My Bob didn't get here till a few moments ago. You ask me where he is? Why, even my Bob doesn't know that. What do you know?"

"I'm afraid I didn't understand," faltered Clare, the red in her cheeks. "I thought you came to tell me that—but—"

"I did come to tell you the greatest piece of news you ever heard in all your life, Kavvy! But I never saw such a place as this is this forenoon! Never! Every girl just simply hedged in with pas and mas and cousins and aunts! I can't get near anybody! But I just knew you wouldn't be bothered with a lot of foolish relatives hanging to you." It was an ugly thrust, but it was plainly without malice. In her excitement Miss Tell forgot to be tactful. She drew in a long breath and then exploded: "Kavvy, Kenneth Marthorn has run away with that widow! They have been married!"

Miss Kavanagh displayed distinct relief. "Oh, *that's* all!"

"All! *All!* For Heaven's sake, what did you think I had run in here to tell you? That the moon was rolling up Willow Avenue?"

"I had something else—of my own—in mind. But it's of no account."

"You look actually pleased! What's the matter with

you? Aren't you just completely tumte-dumbled by what I have told you? I am. Bob says he is—and after all the good advice he gave Kenneth about not making a fool of himself!"

Miss Kavanagh now displayed a placid countenance to her caller; in her soul Clare felt a comforting warmth when she thought of Cora Marthorn; brothers may be as disquieting factors as fathers!

"Please, oh, please say something!" pleaded the scandal-purveyor. "I haven't wasted this piece of news, have I?"

"No," admitted Clare. "It rather pleases me—if it's true and if it disgraces him and his family."

The tone in which that was said distinctly sobered Miss Tell.

"There's a difference between loving to hear of scandal and loving to have it hurt! What you said sounded so cruel!"

"An elopement!" commented Miss Kavanagh, with zest. "If the woman had been anybody fit to marry he wouldn't have needed to run away with her. It's exactly what ought to happen to a man of that sort!"

Miss Tell remembered what had happened when she had offered defense of young Mr. Marthorn on another occasion, and did not presume to make further effort of the same kind.

"As for myself, I have a lot of sympathy for folks in trouble," declared the caller. "Bob says one of the newspapers has got hold of the whole story. When the newspaper man came to him Bob didn't feel that he could lie about the matter, you know. Some kind of a cousin of Bob's is a judge and issued the special license."

Miss Tell appeared to find Miss Kavanagh's steady scrutiny rather disturbing. "Of course, it was the most

natural thing in the world for Bob to mention the matter after he had heard from his cousin. And if a man does a foolish thing he can't expect his friends to go about lying in his behalf—when it's all bound to come out, anyway. And it's best to have the story straight! They were going to put it into the paper that she was a chorus-girl. That would have hurt Kenneth's family ever so much. It was real kind in Bob to give out correct information, I think!"

Clare did not offer comment.

"Now you're holding thoughts back, just as you did once before! I hate these silent folks!"

"About the same as I hate hypocrites," volunteered Miss Kavanagh. Her anxieties of that day made her temper short. She was listening for a step on the stairs; she was dreading the arrival of something which might have the same effect on select Manor Verona as the irruption of a bull moose into the midst of the campus festivities.

"How do you have the supreme nerve to insult me in that style?" asked the indignant caller. "Here I have come to you with—"

"With fresh scandal about a despicable cad," flamed Miss Kavanagh. "I have already expressed my opinion of him. What do I care—"

Miss Tell displayed equal alacrity as an interrupter. "About ordinary politeness or any consideration for a friend's feelings! Oh, very well, Miss Kavanagh. Please give my regards to the wildcats when you get home."

After that robust retort Miss Tell started to depart but halted when a rap on Miss Kavanagh's door announced visitors. A look from Clare signified to Miss Tell's perception, sharpened by anger, that her immediate absence was desired. But the young woman was

in no mood to do anything which might please her hostess, and she stepped back from the door.

Clare opened it. The young person who had served as guide for the expedition retreated, and Clare was face to face with a commanding figure. It was John Kavanagh in his best attire and at his best in manners. The little priest and Doctor March flanked him. For a moment the girl was bewildered and seemed to be hardly sure of the identity of the big man. Her father did not smile on her; he was waiting with a sort of pitiful gravity and tenseness for her to make estimate of him and to show approbation. He had found a woman instead of the girl he had sent away from him.

As for her, she found a personage whom she could not reconcile with her memories of her father. There was distinction of a certain sort about this rather stately gentleman, with his gray hair, his close-cropped beard, his formal dress; even the black ribbon of his eye-glasses, looped across his white waistcoat, had a touch of its own in adding to the imposing ensemble.

"Father!" she gasped. "It's you!"

"Ay, girl o' mine! I'm here!" He stepped forward, put his arm about her, and kissed her forehead. He tried to say something more, but choked. There was wistful appeal in his manner. Affection which is stimulated by constant association has its soft and holy nature; the girl had not been blessed by it. But at that moment she felt a new and more fervent emotion. He appeared at her door like a savior at a prison gate who had come to strike from her the fetters of neglect, misunderstanding, loneliness, and isolation. In her bitterness of proud reserve she had not valued him nor relied upon him except for the mere material things of life.

But at the moment when the desolateness of her outlook seemed especially complete, at the time when for all others was heaped full measure of joy and she had nothing, her father had appeared to her, not rude, loud, and domineering, as she had known him, but mild and gracious and garbed like a gentleman.

He was her own—her own! The thought swept through her consciousness like some electric influence tingling through matter; it was a flood of homesick yearning, breaking all barriers.

Her heart was in her throat, her soul was in her eyes, all the black shadows washed away by the tears. All her being leaped over reserve and the years of separation.

"My daddy! My own daddy!" she cried; then she clasped her hands about his neck, put her head against his breast, and wept and sobbed with the abandon of a little child. "Daddy!" She said it over and over. She caressed it with intonation, she expressed with it her love and gratitude and all her new happiness; she blessed the word every time she uttered it. She drew him into the room, clinging to him.

"We know now where the room is—we can come back later," whispered Father Pierre to Doctor March. They started on tiptoe away.

Miss Tell absorbed full details with her eyes and then followed them, closing the door behind her. With all her gossip's ardor she burned to accost these two men; when they paused under an elm outside the dormitory an opportunity offered itself; they seemed to be rather at a loss what to do with themselves. "I beg your pardon, gentlemen! But on Commencement Day we are bidden to offer attentions to visitors. Do you wish to be shown to any place?"

"We are waiting, mam'selle, only waiting," said the little priest, his hat in his hand, not presuming to address this charming personality as "daughter."

"I am a friend of Miss Kavanagh's. I would like to be nice to any of her friends," solicited Miss Tell, sweetly.

Doctor March, holding his hat at the approved angle, was just then utterly incapable of making any response; he bowed.

Father Pierre was fairly fluttering with agitation, but he partially retained his presence of mind. "We are indeed proud to know that she has so many fine friends."

"Do you come from far away—from her home?"

"Yes, mam'selle! From Sainte Agathe!"

"I never heard of it," declared Miss Tell, forgetting that such admission might arouse some distrust as to the status of her friendship with Clare.

"It is in the Great Toban country, mam'selle." But it was evident from her expression that Miss Tell's, geographical education had not been concerned with any facts regarding the Toban.

"It's nice to see a girl so fond of her father. It's plain that she has been missing him terribly. But he has not been here to visit her before this, has he? I'm sure I should have remembered such a distinguished-looking gentleman! But perhaps he is very busy." Miss Tell had made up her mind to get some kind of a line on that "wood-chopper" story, and these two men were so scared-looking and apparently so harmless that she did not fear a snub.

On the point of John Kavanagh's business Doctor March could find his voice. "Busy, marm! I know that Miss Clare would never be much of a hand to brag, but you must know that there are a lot of dukes in this

world that ain't so big a man as he is when it comes to lording it over men and having things to keep him busy!"

"Good gracious!" gulped the girl, those ever-inquiring eyes of hers opening to their widest extent.

"There's a lot of kings who ain't looked up to the way he is," declared the doctor, finding that he was able to amaze this girl and relishing his success.

This information was so perfectly astonishing that Miss Tell turned her gaze on the priest, seeking confirmation that had some of the authority of sanctity; the wizened old man with the bragging manner did not exactly convince her.

"It is true that he is our great man in the north country," said Father Laflamme. "Many look to him for the money they earn and the food they eat."

The doctor's ardor carried him far. Miss Tell had not been able to conceal all her doubts and the look she had given him nettled the doctor. "Good Josephus! have you had sort of a queen here all this time without knowing what she was?"

"But she has never said anything about herself," confessed Miss Tell, meekly.

"Queens don't brag about themselves—they don't have to! How many girls here have fathers who can afford to carry around their own private physician—that's what I am for John Xavier Kavanagh," announced the doctor, determined to get in a word about his personality and his standing. "How many of your fathers can get up in the morning and tell a thousand men to go to work?"

Doctor March was displaying just a bit too much vehemence—so much that the forehead of the priest displayed wrinkles of dismay. "Yes, mam'selle, we thank

you, but we are only waiting," he said, affording her opportunity of retreat.

The young lady had spirit of her own. "It's a girl's fault if she doesn't make herself known, sir! It isn't fair, either! What if Cora Marthorn had come here to college and had kept mum about herself and her father? She would have—"

"What did you say the name was?" rudely demanded the doctor, knitting his eyebrows.

"I said Cora Marthorn!"

"You don't mean that she's the daughter of the Marthorn who is president of the Great Temiscouata, do you?"

"I don't the least know what he has to do with all those funny sounds you just made," retorted Miss Tell, with tartness. "But he owns a lot of mills and makes paper—"

"That's him! Why, bless your poor deluded young soul, sissy!" declared the doctor, losing all sense of deference in the case of a young woman who displayed so much ignorance, "you don't mean to match a Marthorn up beside a Kavanagh, do you? Phuh! Marthorn, only this very spring, sent one of his dudes crawling to John Kavanagh, begging John to join drives so as to—"

"But this young lady does not care!" protested Father Laflamme. "She will not understand. We will walk on!"

"She is bragging about a Marthorn," insisted the choleric doctor. "She will understand something when I say that John Kavanagh thumbed his nose at the dude and told him to get out from underfoot. She will understand—"

But just at that moment Miss Tell spied a protector. Really, the heat of Doctor March was becoming the least bit alarming! There was a peculiar glare in his eyes.

The young woman had never had any experience with elderly gentlemen of whom it was alleged that they were a bit cracked. The protector seemed to be looking for somebody, and when she hailed him he hurried to her with an alacrity which indicated that he had found just what he was looking for.

"She will understand, and so will all inquiring friends understand," blustered the doctor, taking the new arrival into the conference, "that if old windy Marthorn himself comes up there into the Toban and gets into John Xavier Kavanagh's way, the aforesaid John Xavier Kavanagh will kick old Marthorn all the way from Ragmuff to Tulandic."

"Hey! What's all this we have here?" demanded the protector, who was a young man of attire irreproachable.

"It's a gentleman who makes funny noises every now and then and is a very warm friend of Clare Kavanagh and her father, Bob!"

"Yes, but the joint debate, the fire of oratory!"

"To one and all I'll talk the same!" stated the doctor, not diminishing his fervor. "So will John Kavanagh. Old Marthorn doesn't dare to face Old X. K. in the Toban."

"Do ask him what those queer noises mean, Bob?" pleaded Miss Tell, entirely at her ease in the lee of her protector.

"If you're a friend of old Marthorn's," proceeded Doctor March, brandishing his plug-hat in the face of the wondering Mr. Bob, "you know what has happened to him this season on the drive."

"Ah—oh—he was just going to tell me about it when the—the cat asked to be let out or—or something happened! Anyway, he must have forgotten what he was

going to say next. Where was the drive, and what happened to it? And I thought he had sold all his horses!" Mr. Bob nudged Miss Tell slyly while his honest brown eyes assured the doctor as to ingenuous innocence.

"John Kavanagh told the whole Temiscouata Company to go to Tophet; he blew out the river and got his logs down first, and he'll do the same every year. And if old Marthorn ever faces him, John Kavanagh will give him full directions how to get to a place where you can't sit down unless you have on asbestos pants."

"I think you and I better be walking on, Bob," suggested Miss Tell.

"Just a minute! It occurs to me that Mr. Marthorn might really like to get in touch with the explosive gentleman who has so much detailed information, 'tis claimed, in regard to a hot locality toward which another member of the Marthorn family has recently started. He's probably there already; however, he might be overtaken. The gentleman says he can give full directions."

Doctor March was talking on without listening.

"Where is—" began Mr. Bob, but the girl checked him.

"Don't tease that man any more—he's crazy, I do believe, and you'll make him worse. He's talking about Clare Kavanagh's father—and her father is up with Clare in her room."

Mr. Bob answered the tug of her arm. He manifested sudden and eager desire to have a word with her away from the disturbing distraction of the doctor's vociferous championship of the cause of Kavanagh. "Here, is he? And according to latest bulletins he seems to be perfectly ready to play bull in the Marthorn china-shop. Do you know, Harriet, when those newspapers get along here to-day Marthorn, senior, will be looking around for

master of men, was hushed by the mere sight of Kavanagh's face. Peace and holy joy mingled in the serenity of the countenance.

"And why are ye snarling and scowling like a bobcat with his hind leg in a trap?" inquired "Old X. K." "Don't ye know, man, that ye are here on the grandest day of my life?"

"But no man, ay, and no woman, shall stand before me and say that you are afraid of old Marthorn of the Temiscouata, sir."

"Who has been saying it to you? How does Marthorn come to fit the talk on this day?"

"I think the good doctor did not exactly understand," interposed the priest. "The young lady simply mentioned Cora Marthorn—I gathered that she is here."

Father questioned daughter with upcocked eyebrow. "I never heard of her," he said.

"She is in my class," stated the girl in a cold tone.

"And I have told 'em that when you meet him, if you're called on to do it, you'll tell him as you told the dude he sent to the Toban that you'd see him in—"

"Hold on there, March! By what token are you speaking for me? I have no quarrels—not any more! I'm done with the edge of the tongue and the flat of the hand. I shall never see the man—he does not come into the north country." He turned again to his daughter. "Is her father the president of the Temiscouata Company, do you know, dear?"

"He is Colonel Stephen Marthorn."

"The same!"

"I was not trying to speak for you, sir—it was not that! But I wanted all to understand that you're as high as the best of 'em."

"There is no trouble between you and Colonel Marthorn, father?" the girl inquired, anxiously.

"There is none, darlin'. I never saw the man."

"You will see him here to-day. He is president of the board of trustees."

"It's a good job for him—better than bossing a company that is cutting the bantling trees! But leave him be! I have no interest in him. And leave your talk off him, March. Ye're not wise in your talk and ye lack manners, and it was not for talk I brought ye down. However, ye're a good friend!" The face of the contrite doctor touched him in this softer mood of his. "I say, we're not here to jaw. And listen, the two of ye! It's news! The colleen and I are going hand in hand to roam the world together! She is going to show me how to rest and how to play! And it's a grand world, so I am finding out, and I have been missing all of it. There's many a fine sight to be seen, and my Clare will be able to tell me all about it. So it's off for the playtime we are. Eh, Father Pierre?"

He laughed with the unction of a child and put an arm about the shoulder of the priest.

"May happiness walk with you!" said the priest, with fervor.

Kavanagh was erect again. His eyes were bright and there was color in the hollows of his cheeks. He looked up into the blue of the sky through the waving verdure of the tall elm which shaded the group. The soft scents of June were on the breeze which he sniffed gratefully. "This is a good world and God loves it," he told them. He gave the little priest a side-glance full of meaning. "I'm not afraid any more, Father Pierre. And now we're going to see my colleen step forth with the best of 'em!"

She walked close to him, clinging tightly to his big fist. She looked up to him with an expression in her eyes of an emotion he did not understand when he returned her gaze. It was mute beseeching—contrite appeal for forgiveness. The real father had stepped into the sanctuary of her being; the dream father had been banished forever.

CHAPTER VII

Col. Stephen Marthorn finds out from John Kavanagh himself just who it was that started the X. K. drive and select Manor Verona is bombed by a sensation.

A BAND, discreetly subdued as to brasses, melodiously augmented as to strings and wood-wind, phrased classical music for the afternoon promenade concert on the campus of Manor Verona.

The serious business of Commencement Day was over; it ended when Colonel Marthorn handed down the last rolled sheet of parchment, tied with its mauve ribbon. The demeanor of Colonel Marthorn made the business seem more serious than usual. In past years he had rendered the ceremony notably pleasing by means of his mellowed urbanity and his aspect of benignant interest. On this last occasion, although he hid his emotions behind a set expression as hard as the face of a wooden idol, those who gazed on him knew what he was hiding and guessed at the nature of his mental torments. A poll of those who commented furtively would have shown, probably, that most of them believed that the father of the wayward Kenneth was consumed by bitter anger.

"I'm glad my name doesn't begin with an A," confided Miss Tell to her nearest neighbor in the garlanded inclosure in the chapel, the section held sacred for the

seating of the Senior Class. "I do believe he's going to bite the first one who marches up, just because she's a girl!"

The promenade concert afforded the opportunity for which all had been waiting; under the shielding strains of the music the tongues clattered.

It was an afternoon designed for better things than resentment, bitterness, and gossip. There was comfort in the shade of the trees. Even as the guards at the gates of Manor Verona kept out the uninvited and the undesirables, the big trees admitted only enough of the elves of the sunshine to dance merry sarabands on the sward. The scattered groups on the broad campus made the scene gay with finery polychromatic. There was a lake at the foot of the campus slope and the facets of its ripples flashed splendor when the breeze flicked the surface. On all the panorama the music put its spell—idealizing actuality, as it were. Envious birds caroled in rivalry and distant laughter of girls sounded under the gay awnings of the boats on the little lake.

"It's a wonder all the fairies and fays of County Clare haven't emigrated, too, provided news of a place like this could have reached 'em," said Kavanagh, convoyed by his own three stanch adherents. "It has been my bit of a joke, darlin', to say that I was makin' ye a lady at a place where it cost a thousand dollars a minute—but now that I see it, it's worth all of that! Is much of the rest of the world like this?"

"It's a beautiful world, daddy!"

"Ye have been about to see it—I'm glad."

"But it was all by your goodness—that's why I had the chance to see it." The girl was constantly seeking opportunity to put her gratitude in words, as a repentant

debtor is eager to pay, in prosperity, a kindly creditor who never pressed for payment in adversity.

"I saved all the picture-cards ye sent to me. I would say to myself it must be fine if there are such places. But the men who make pictures and who make pomes are such omadhauns o' liars! However, it's now your own word that makes me know I have been wrong. Even what I am seeing and hearing doesn't seem real and true to me like your word."

"I ought to have written longer letters—better letters, daddy! I am ashamed!"

"They could have been no better, though I'd not have minded if they'd been longer," he said, stout in his defense of all she did. "But, sure, we'll not need the letters now when we go roaming together. And ye need not look at me so wistful, Doctor March. Ye are not to come along. I don't need medicine and I shall not wear a plug-hat." He slapped his breast. "The tunk of that Temiscouata popple—I don't feel it any more. It's as I said. The sight of my Clare has made me well."

The president of the Great Temiscouata was at that moment in conference with Second Vice-president Donaldson in the trustees' office at Manor Verona. There was dust on Donaldson's shoulders and concern was on his face. He had just been whirled up from the railroad station in a taxicab. He was reporting on a matter where he had been appointed special and secret commissioner. "That's all I was able to scrape up about her after I got your telegram, Colonel. And it isn't much, I'm sorry to say! But I thought I'd better confer with you before stirring up too much hullabaloo in the way of pursuit."

"You are quite right, Donaldson. I have tried to go

on quite as usual, but it's hard work. What has hurt me worst is that my son hasn't notified me himself—some word by telegram or letter. It must be bad business! It must be shameful business or he would explain to me."

"I wish I had more to tell you that is definite and encouraging, sir. But the woman seems to have done absolutely no talking about herself. I can only repeat that she has a pretty face and plenty of money to spend."

"We will wait a few days. There seems to be nothing else to do unless we start police work—and your remark about a hullabaloo impressed me. My God! Donaldson, this has been an awful blow! Confound it, Kenneth was different! He wasn't like the run of these young sap-gags with money."

"Perhaps he is all right now, Colonel."

"It doesn't look like it. If he'd been like the others I would have been better prepared. I wish to Heavens I could get the thing out of my mind till I hear from him!"

Often a wish may serve as autosuggestion. In his effort to get something out of his mind it was necessary to crowd it with another topic, and Colonel Marthorn, groping, came upon it; it was one ugly subject displacing another!

"By the way, Donaldson, that young ape of a Bob Appleton—you don't know him, and that's to your advantage—came to me to-day and said that a Kavanagh from up-country is here on the campus. It seems his daughter is graduating. I gave a diploma to a girl named Clare Kavanagh."

"I never heard of her," stated Donaldson.

"It doesn't seem reasonable that this is the same Kavanagh who has played us such a dirty trick."

"I am positive it cannot be the man," declared the vice-

president, who had contemptuously dulled his ears to the slogan of the X. K. drive. "In the first place, John Kavanagh is too old to have a young daughter, and, if he has a daughter, she's washing dishes for him instead of being in a college like this. The man is an old ignoramus."

"The only reason I paid any attention to young Appleton was because he said this Kavanagh was ready to make some fierce talk to me if we met. It struck me that the young tattle-mouth must have received some special information."

"It does sound a bit interesting," acknowledged Donaldson. "It's the kind of gossip one would not naturally hear on the campus unless it came from some party who knew about the trouble. Perhaps I'd better hunt up this Kavanagh, whoever he may be."

"I'll go with you. I'd hate to miss an opportunity of meeting the right one," stated the colonel, the grim set of his face drawing its lines more deeply.

It is an interesting commentary on what clothes will do for a man to state that President Marthorn and Vice-president Donaldson, of the Great Temiscouata, walked twice past their arch-enemy in their rounds of the crowded campus without Donaldson's sense of recognition being pricked. At the second meeting he looked John Kavanagh squarely in the face. It may well be that the chastened look and the shortened beard effectually masked the Kavanagh countenance that had confronted Donaldson on the Sobois Grand head-works.

But Kavanagh's keen gaze had noted. His memory might have been helped a bit by the fact that the president of the syndicate accompanied his underling. "Old X. K." had studied with interest the personality of Stephen

Marthorn a few hours before in the college chapel. Kavanagh did not give the vice-president more than a casual glance. "That's the skip-bug who stood on the edge of the head-works and danced to the tune of the bullies of Kavanagh's crew," the old man informed Doctor March. "I wonder if he feels too good to speak to me except when he wants to talk his own business!"

"I'll run and bring him back so that you can show him his manners and tell him what," volunteered the doctor. "I was saying to-day for all to know—"

"Hold your own tongue, man! I'm done with all that, I tell ye! This day I wouldn't talk rough to a splattering cookee, not if he spilled my pannikin o' tea down the back of my neck."

"Did Mr. Marthorn send that man to make trouble for you, daddy?" asked the girl.

"Shush, darlin'! Who could make trouble for me with the head of my drive ahead of all at the sluiceway?" He snapped his finger into his palm. "That for Marthorn!"

Her eyes sparkled. "I'm glad to hear you say it, daddy! I hate the name of Marthorn!" His amazed eyes searched her face and she bit her lip. "I'm sorry I let it out! But no matter, now that it's said."

"But what has he done to you, colleen?"

"He? Nothing."

"Then what—"

"It's nothing!" But now her lips trembled and tears were in her eyes.

"By the gods, who has been doing anything to hurt the heart of my girl?"

"It's wrong to tell you! I meant to keep it all to myself. Perhaps I have been a fool and am most at fault.

But *she* has been the grand one in the class. *She* has distributed the honors and the favors. *She* has been the one to have all the say. And she has thought I wasn't good enough for her and the rest."

"Who is that *she*?" he demanded, his face hard.

"His daughter," she sobbed. She pointed at the retreating colonel.

"Marthorn's girl?"

"Yes."

"Insult you, eh?" Threat was in his tones.

"No, no, not that! I don't know just how to tell you. I have no business to say anything, now that it's all over. But I have been so lonely—so lonely!" Inexpressible pathos was in the wail. It was confession which four years of torture wrenched from her in spite of herself. She replied to the suffering wonderment his countenance expressed. "They put me away from them, daddy! She had the say. All the cozy meetings—I was never in them! Oh, I can't just make you understand how girls feel in such things! You can't go and ask to be taken in. It just has to come to you right. And it never came right! I have been alone till I almost forgot how to talk. Like that, year after year! And when you came it was as if one had come to let me out of my prison." She was in the hook of his arm, her face against his breast. He shifted glance from her to the little priest and to the doctor, bewilderment and anger mingled in his demeanor.

"So it hasn't been fairyland, after all!" he muttered. "A man can be a devil with his fists and his teeth! But damn a woman who chews into a quivering soul with her eyes and her tongue!" There was no humor in that Irish bull; he uttered it with ferocity.

"I ought to have kept it to myself. I didn't mean to tell."

"It's best out, darlin'! It's best out! All along there has been a look in your eye and a droop to your lip that I didn't understand. I know now! Ye've been shamed and put upon. And what a man would laugh at for a girl is the bitter drink o' damnation! I can understand!"

Father Laflamme, bareheaded, ran the brim of his new hat around and around in his trembling hands; his mournful face rebuked the shine of his shoes when he stared down at them.

"But it will be all right from now, daddy. You are with me," she murmured, getting control of herself after her outburst. "We'll go away and be together. I can thank her for one thing, at least! She coaxed her father to put Commencement Day two weeks earlier. And that has brought you to me to-day!"

Kavanagh drew a long breath. He stared out into vacancy as if he were gazing on the tumult of the forced drive. Without doubt he saw the wrecks of the splash-dams and the partial undoing of the Temiscouata pulpwood drive.

"Father Pierre, what does it say in Holy Writ about the queer way God takes to do wonders?"

"It is a poet who says it, not the Bible. 'God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.'"

"A poet, eh? It's the first time I ever heard the truth out of one of 'em. Ay-oh, old Marthorn, ye've been well paid for the slights and the slurs and the sorrows your snob lady-girl has put upon my poor colleen! And it's lucky for ye that I didn't know it all! Else the only use you'd have for your paper-mills this season would be for spiders' gymnasiums."

He stretched himself to the full limit of his gaunt height and glared over the heads of the sauntering throng, seeking the sleek back of the magnate in order to cast a look of hatred after him.

"But it's all over now," said the girl, made apprehensive by his manner; she had seen that look on his face before and knew it for portentous preliminary. "It may have been my own fault. You and I will forget it all. We'll have other things to think about."

"Four years put upon! My own good girl!" he growled.

"We'll go to my room," she pleaded. "Come, Father Laflamme! Come, Doctor March! I'll brew some tea. We'll have a good time."

John Kavanagh saw Colonel Marthorn and his companion swing about in their promenade and start back.

"That's it! Looking for somebody! I've got the eyes for ye, even at this distance!" Somehow he suggested the angry dog, bristling. "Looking for me, eh?"

"Father, you wouldn't have words here, among all these people!"

"I'll not run away—him looking at me." He straddled his legs.

But Colonel Marthorn was not looking at John Kavanagh; he was looking at Kavanagh's daughter just then. "Donaldson, there's the girl now! The girl named Kavanagh."

Donaldson walked on a bit more briskly, peering. "Well, I'll be—" he blurted. "Talk about your old wolf and the lamb's pelt! A plug-hat and a tail-coat on Kavanagh! No wonder I didn't know him!"

"Do you mean to say that's Kavanagh himself?"

"That's the man, Colonel! I'm certainly a poor guide, but if you had seen him as I saw him—"

Colonel Marthorn had hurried on ahead. Bob Appleton, hopefully skirmishing near by, got a glimpse of the baited gentleman's face and decided that he was right in his surmise that the colonel was looking for something into which to set his teeth.

Donaldson managed, by a sprint, to arrive in time to make hasty introduction of his superior. Kavanagh neither bowed his head nor acknowledged the introduction by any word.

Clare, snuggling close to him, took in both her hands the clenched fist that hung by his side, stroked it open and twined her fingers with his.

"Daddy," she whispered, "don't—don't forget where you are!"

The lips of Father Pierre, accredited mentor of manners, unclosed and closed, but he lacked the temerity to interfere.

Colonel Marthorn was not in the mood to receive meekly such patent affront as the Kavanagh scowl. There was a rasp in his voice. "I have a matter of business to talk over with you, sir!"

"I am not down here to talk business with anybody," declared Kavanagh, contemptuously.

"This is not the place for our talk. This way, please!" persisted the colonel, waving command.

"No, it's not the place! I give ye credit for a speck of good sense!"

"I ask you to step over to the office with me and Mr. Donaldson."

"Oh, do ye so?" "Old X. K.," now that he had been offered combat by Marthorn's insulting manner, felt more like himself. However, Marthorn's insult was out-pointed by the mere intonation of Kavanagh's query.

"You certainly do not refuse to meet us on a matter of business, do you?"

Clare rose on tiptoe. As parlous as was the situation out there in public, she feared more from a private meeting, realizing from the demeanor of these men that there was between them more serious trouble than she understood. "Don't go with him! Please don't go!" she whispered, with almost frenzy of entreaty. She was not thinking clearly in her fear and distress, but she did feel that her rash disclosures had made her partly responsible.

"I have come down here to be with my daughter! I shall stay with her. She has been neglected by others all too long. I need not name the others!"

"I do not understand the reference, sir. I can't see that it has anything to do with our business together."

"Nor I! But I tell ye I'm not talking business!"

"You are ashamed to talk business! You are ashamed to meet me, face to face and man to man!" blazed the colonel. Under other circumstances, in spite of what Kavanagh had done that spring on the drive, President Marthorn would have been able to talk business matters according to his regular business code, deliberately and dignifiedly. But the ugly bitterness in him was seeking outlet—had been boiling like checked lava ever since the newspapers had brought to him that sordid story about his own son; the repression demanded by the formal functions of the day had increased the pressure; the gage of his wrath marked the bursting-point.

The little fingers in Kavanagh's fist squeezed more tightly.

Donaldson, remembering the interview at Sobois Grand, was not in much better humor than his chief. "You

understand that I have told Colonel Marthorn all about your dirty work on the drive, Kavanagh, and your cheap insults when I went to you, trying to talk business. Now don't show us any more of that sort of thing!"

The old man was silent for a little while, standing stiffly. For the first time in his life he was striving earnestly and heroically to dam back the torrent of his natural passion. His daughter's hand was helping him, the sight of the little priest assisted, even the music of the band, softly lilting, brought its share of softening influence. Folks were listening; they were moving slowly and were making believe that they were indifferent, but he knew that their ears were out. More than ever he felt himself to be a stranger and out of place. Honestly and wistfully, through all the weeks preceding, he had planned and pondered how he must act in order that his manners might not shame her there in the midst of the fine folks. There was an oath of some sort—a pledge of an offering to Saint Anthony, perhaps! In the riot of his emotions he was not just sure—but he had sworn to himself that he would not forget his manners.

Colonel Marthorn stepped closer. "It's one thing to brag and bluster up in your God-forsaken woods, Kavanagh, but now you're down here among decent men and you can see the difference. Afraid to talk business, eh?"

"When you stole our water was it any different from stealing our money—thousands of our dollars?" demanded Donaldson, taking the cue from his master.

The old man leaned forward and thrust out his chin. One would have expected truculence. But his voice was mildly inquiring. "Why don't ye whistle, sir?" he asked Marthorn.

"Whistle!"

"Why, yes! There may be more of your pups handy by that ye can call up to bark at me!"

A grin accompanied the remark, but, for the colonel, this rude effort at jest made the situation only more intolerable.

"But just one minute before ye whistle—or do anything rash," advised the old man. "I have told ye that I'm not here to talk business. No more *am* I! But there's a piece of news ye ought to know, and then mayhap ye'll tread on your way and mind your own affairs more carefully. Ye drove me to bang my drive out two weeks ahead of time."

"I did not! I never—"

"Hold on before ye call me a liar! I don't like to be poked into hot speech when there's a holy man in hearing! And now, by the way, Father Pierre—hoping all will listen—what was the bit of a truth the poet had to say?"

Colonel Marthorn turned an amazed scowl on the new person called into the colloquy.

"It was the quotation, sir," said the little curé, bowing respectfully to the great men from the city, "'God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.'"

"I'm glad ye have just taken time to harken to that, Marthorn, sir! For did not your girl ask ye to set ahead the day—this day? And did ye not set ahead the day? Ye did! And I had sworn to myself to be here to see my own girl step out with the best of 'em. But first it was for me to ride the king log into the sorting-boom. June the eight', you said! Steal your water, say you? Dod butter your pipestem drive! I'd have put my drive down in time if I'd had to take every stick of your slim-shanked pulp timber to use as pick-poles and cant-dog handles

to pry along my honest logs. Ye set the date." He beat his fist upon his breast. "I'm *here!*" He spoke loudly. Passers-by stopped to listen.

"Let's go, father," the girl implored.

"And that's all the word I'll pass with you about business, Marthorn, sir!"

"Do you dare—do you have the damnable audacity to get behind my innocent daughter as a shield? You are a coward in your talk as well as a renegade in your business."

"But if you would have the truth I have given it to you—and it's backed up by what the poet said."

Donaldson touched the colonel's arm. "You will not get anywhere with him. I couldn't! There's quite a crowd listening!"

But the father of Kenneth Marthorn and of Cora Marthorn was not to be controlled by any of the usual considerations and amenities at that moment. In his fury he thrust at Kavanagh to reach the same spot which was aching so poignantly in himself. "Your girl doesn't belong in a college like this any more than you are fit to be here on the campus to-day!"

The old man had endured the epithets of "coward" and "renegade" so meekly that Marthorn was emboldened; his ire needed to be appeased. "You must have lied to get her in here!"

"Your dirty abuse of me, I care naught for it! But mind ye, man, mind ye!"

"If I had known she was here I would have used my authority to have her expelled. My daughter and the ladies of this college should have been protected against the breed of—"

"Hold there! Hold there!" It was the voice of John

Xavier Kavanagh as his men heard it in times of stress. It reached to the far extent of the campus. It broke upon the music-laden peace of the place like a charge set off by "Rend-rock" Mulkern. Kavanagh snatched his hand from the clinging fingers of his daughter. He threw his silk hat upon the sward; it was a significant act, unconscious avatar of the fighting spirit of the past and gone champions of the Kavanaghs.

"Who are ye that's better than I am? And who of yours is better than one of mine? I hear the story about your blackguardly son from the gossip here this day. My colleen smirch your lady-snob daughter! I hope you and your spawn will freeze in hell for the slights and the sorrows you've given my honest girl! Ye're taking your chance with me here to shame me before my own. My God! I have tried so hard! Our fight belongs up there!" He shook his fist toward the north. "You don't dare to meet me there, face to face."

"I'll meet you with law, Kavanagh!" shouted the colonel.

"Bring it on, ye pulp-slobbering hound! I was sawing timber for honest houses and decent homes before ye began to make paper for to print their lies on. Damn you and your paper!" His daughter and the little priest came in front of him, beseeching. But he thrust them aside with his big hands and leaned close to Marthorn, chin outthrust like a ledge projecting from a Toban mountain-side. "I'm ready for ye, your law and your bullies and your tricks! But come and fight me where the fight belongs, I tell ye! My girl doesn't belong in that fight! Ye've dragged her in here! Ye've tried to break her heart. And for that, for your dirty word, there's only the one thing! It's this!" With all his

force, swinging his open hand the full radius of his arm, he dealt Colonel Marthorn one mighty blow across the mouth.

It was "the flat of the Kavanagh's hand"! It was his way in the north country. It was involuntary rather than otherwise. It was a part of the same impulse which prompted him to throw his hat on the ground.

Men rushed between them. Horrified women screamed. And immediately following the tumult of excitement there was a hush as if hideous calamity had petrified the feelings and paralyzed the activities at the Commencement of Manor Verona. That select institution had been jarred as effectually as if Marthorn Observatory had been blown skyward by a bomb. One instinctively knew that the affair would never be forgotten, that it would be a topic in years to come how the president of the board of trustees had been flailed across the face by the hand of a wild man from some unknown place in the wilderness.

Marthorn was sent reeling back, but Donaldson saved him from falling and escorted him away.

For a few moments John Kavanagh stood staring straight ahead with red eyes which saw nothing; then he slowly lowered his chin and gazed into the palm of his outspread hand. He heard the murmurs and, with furtive glances from side to side, he saw the faces of those who surrounded him—the shocked, amazed, rebuking faces. He swayed. He put the offending hand to his breast and groaned. The pain had come back. But this time it was not merely the physical pain from the blow dealt by the "Temiscouata popple." His collision with the Temiscouata president had stricken him with deeper and more poignant anguish; his very soul seemed crushed within him. He knew the enormity of the offense. He

had shamed his girl—forever shamed her in the eyes of the world. And it seemed that all the world was there to see.

It was not mere falling when he went down upon the sword; his shoulders and his breast seemed to crumble and crumple under his coat and to leave the fabric slack and loose. He sank down on his knees even while the doctor and the priest strove to hold him up.

His daughter kneeled before him, clasping her hands, trying to speak to him, choking with the effort. His eyes were closed.

"The man must be intoxicated," declared a feminine voice, icy and deliberate.

"I should say it's a matter for the police," said a man.

Whatever other failings Miss Harriet Tell possessed, ability for forcible lack of expression was not among them; she kept her tongue as fit as an athlete keeps his muscles by daily training, and she was ready for this emergency.

"Don't talk nonsense, you people! This is a very important gentleman. He has more power than some lords or dukes! I know what I am talking about. His daughter is my friend." In lower tones she urged, poking her fist into the young man's ribs, "For mercy sakes, Bob, why don't you find your voice and back me up?"

Clare was holding her palms against her father's cheeks, her face close to his.

It was evident from Mr. Appleton's expression that he was abundantly satisfied with the spectacular effects of the sporting proposition which he had assisted in staging and felt under obligations to the combatant left on the field. "Ladies and gentlemen, kindly suspend judgment. In big matters of business the best of gentlemen often forget themselves. Sometimes even our statesmen have

a little one-round go till the sergeant-at-arms gets to 'em." He picked up the silk hat. "This is a very distinguished man, in his parts." He deftly and carefully smoothed the ruffled nap of the hat. "Charity should rule us all on a festal day like this," he prated, blandly. "Sympathy should inspire us. In our own all-prevailing sense of human nature we should find excuses. How often have the most of us wanted to slap a man's face, but have lacked the courage!"

Kavanagh opened his eyes slowly, responding to Clare's appealing voice.

"God forgive me—God forgive me," he moaned, brokenly. "I was trying so hard, alannah! The little priest will tell ye of my good resolves. I could have stood it for myself! But it was of you he—"

"Hush!" she whispered, putting her arms around his neck.

"I have shamed ye! I have shamed ye!"

She put her lips closer to his ear. "Listen! What you said was what I wanted to say to 'em long ago! My throat has been hot with it! What you did was what I wanted to do. My hand has itched."

"But they were looking—they were listening! It's shame for ye!"

"It would be worse shame if I'd had no one to do for me. And it was my fault. I should have kept it from you."

He in his weakness, she in her passionate absorption, were forgetting what sort of a tableau they were furnishing. He put out both his hands to her and rose slowly, helped by the priest and the doctor.

"I beg your pardon, sir! I took the liberty to slick your hat," said Mr. Bob, politely offering the head-gear. "I hope your attack is nothing serious."

"And I'll come to your room with you, Kavvy, if you need me," volunteered Miss Tell, impetuous in her forgiveness.

All the other faces seemed hostile. "You are good," said Clare, gratefully. "But I'm going to have him lie down and be quiet!" She was making a brave effort to be matter-of-fact.

Miss Tell patted the girl's hand. "Kavvy, you buck up! I don't know what kind of a duke your father is up where you and he live, but he certainly acts the part when anybody makes faces at him. So don't you mind."

Kavanagh shook off the hands of Father Laflamme and Doctor March. "Leave me be, my boys! If they think I'm drunk or a dead man, I'll show 'em different!" But when he was out of the throng and on his way to the dormitory he put his hand to his breast and kept it there, moaning: "It has all come back, and worse with it! Their old water-soaked log—their old devil of a president. The Temiscouata has got me!"

Doctor March found his voice at last. "Mr. Kavanagh, the wallop you handed to that old hyena did my soul good. He's going to think twice—"

"Hold your tongue on it, man! Oh, why didn't I think *once!*"

They went on in silence.

In her room he obeyed her and lay down on the couch while she ministered to him. All the time his eyes pleaded with her like the eyes of a hound seeking forgiveness after mischief.

"And now I'm not fit to go out in the world with ye, darlin'. Not fit! I'd always be shaming ye."

She stood before him, her eyes flashing. "I am proud of what you did. I have told you it was what I have

wanted to say! It has been in me—here!” She drove her hand against her breast with all the passion John Kavanagh could display and quite in his manner. “I’m your own true daughter!”

He blinked. “But the education—the making you a fine lady!”

“I belong in the woods—up in the woods with *you!*” It was the outburst of her reawakened loyalty, her contrition and love striving to make amends. In her passionate fervor she did not realize how cruelly she had torn open his fresh wound.

“And it’s because I belong in the woods and am not fit for the world outside—that’s why I have spoiled everything for ye, colleen. It’s not the place for ye up there. Ye’ll be sad and sorry up there. I’ll look at ye, and it will break my heart up there. For ye’re the fine lady!” Tears welled in his eyes and he scrubbed knuckles across his cheeks just as a sick and weary child would do it.

The girl kneeled beside the couch and took his hands in hers. “You don’t understand! But you must understand! I have never told you untruths. I haven’t wanted to go back to Sainte Agathe. I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I was hating the world and all in it. I didn’t even know whether I cared for you. But now I know—now that you have come to me. You are mine. And if there’s shame because you protected me, we’ll be ashamed together—and glad—*glad!* Oh, I’m your own girl, I say!” Her voice had been shrill, her cheeks were painted with vivid red. But all at once she put her forehead against his arm. “I know now! I’m homesick. I love you. I need you. I want to go home, daddy; I want to go home,” she sobbed.

CHAPTER VIII

Clare Kavanagh's repentance suggests service for the sake of John Kavanagh's peace of mind; and a story of her Kavanagh spirit goes abroad.

FOR John Kavanagh that home-going was a holy pilgrimage.

The sudden determination to adventure with Clare to see the world had thrilled him, had filled him with boyish exhilaration, had tickled anticipation. However, underneath had been second-thought's complexity of dragging inertia: old age's fear of changes and experiments, the timidity of a man long confined to one circle, the anxious fear of the business head as to what would happen while he was away, the knowledge that the comfortable habits of a lifetime must be supplanted by all sorts of annoying deference to the manners of the outside world.

But now he was going home because she had begged him to go, and every glance from her shining eyes and every word from her lips assured him of her sincerity.

For Clare, the journey had precious sanctity; she felt like a lost child who had been frightened by the evening shadows, but, at last, had found her father's hand reached forth to her and was trudging homeward by his side. The queer little ache in her throat only accentuated the thankful comfort she felt within her heart.

Kavanagh felt another emotion besides calm joy. In spite of all his daughter had said to him by way of pardon, that affair with Colonel Marthorn was constantly before him. Shame kept blazing up, stamp upon the embers of memory of that horrible scene as he might! He had not pardoned Marthorn for the insult to Clare nor had he pardoned himself for the manner in which he had allowed his rage to run away with him. Those two emotions furnished barbs for a shame that rankled. He felt that he had disgraced the whole Toban country. In his weakened physical condition he was not able to throw off the oppression of his thoughts as he might have done in the old hale days. He was weak. There was something almost childish in his surrender to the obsession of disgrace which could not be forgiven.

Therefore, considering the state of John Kavanagh's mind in general, Dr. Archaleus March's officiousness was something not far from heinous. The doctor's perception was not keen nor was his tact of a high order. But his loyalty was spiritedly wide awake! Memories flamed in the doctor: John Kavanagh had made his bigness among the best of 'em; he had asserted himself; he had smashed a blow across the face of the great man of the Temiscouata Company; he was coming home with his educated daughter. According to Doctor March's best private judgment, all this demanded a celebration worthy of the bigness of such a triumph. Doctor March decided that it ought to be made a surprise for John Kavanagh. Therefore, without making a confidant of anybody, even of Father Laflamme, he wired ahead to Abner Kezar to secure a brass band and to give out the news of the home-coming. Doctor March remembered something about mention of a brass band for that home-coming. "But

it's up to me to cinch it—to see that the right thing is done at the right time,” the doctor told himself.

He cocked his stovepipe hat at a jaunty angle when at last they were bumping up the branch line toward Ste. Agathe. He went up and down the aisles of the two cars, exuding his importance, suppressing his excitement, whispering in the ears of passengers.

“What sort of a basket of eggs is that clucking old rooster trying to hatch?” asked “Old X. K.,” irritably. “Do you know, Father Pierre?”

“He has not said anything to me.”

“Glory be, I’ve got him ’most home where his mouth won’t stir up any more trouble for me. The lies he told about me behind my back down there! And me only a poor, old, ashamed fool—ashamed—ashamed!” He stole a glance at Clare’s tender and reproachful face. “Ye have forgiven me—I know ye have, darlin’, for the lie isn’t in ye! Ne’ertheless, I did it—and after I had tried so hard! But we’ll go tiptoeing up the hill together—you and I. And we’ll be home again!”

The remembrance that he had planned for a general jollification made his cheeks burn. In the new light which had come, to him out of that dearer intimacy of theirs he realized more and more that he had received into his keeping something precious and sacred. The mellow twilight was shrouding the blue mountains of the Toban.

“We’ll sit for a bit in the evening in front of the house and hear the old falls and feel the quiet of all the rest of it,” he told her. “We’ll step out of the car quietly and we’ll tiptoe up the hill—and I hope they’ll all take the hint and stay away till the morrow.”

But John Kavanagh’s dream of tiptoeing into Ste.

Agathe was shattered before the train came squalling to a standstill. With blatant brasses and booming drum a band brayed out "The Campbells Are Coming!" The roar of many voices, cheering in ragged chorus, made din that echoed from hill to hill.

Kavanagh rose, gasping for breath, muttering oaths, and rushed to the platform of the car. He stood there and brandished his fists at the crowd and roared commands. But they accepted his gestures as welcoming hail and were yelling so enthusiastically that they heard not a word that he said. At the foot of the car-steps Doctor March was serving as cheer leader.

"Dod butter ye, ye meddling old dose of bot and spavin physic, so this is what your bobbing and your bowing and your buzzing meant, eh? Take that!"

Instantly occurred the wreck of the only two plug-hats in Ste. Agathe. Kavanagh swung off his own head-gear and smashed it over the tile of the unsuspecting Doctor March. Then the old man leaped down and belabored the doctor with the smashed hat as long as that gentleman was within reach, and flung the wreck after him when he escaped into the crowd.

That amazing performance stilled the uproar more effectively than the speech John Kavanagh launched at them. "Home with ye, ye loafing blackguards! Get to your homes! Have ye no more respect or decency in ye than to make a circus shindy of this?"

"It's to show due honor where honor is due," cried Romeo Shank, waving a paper under the nose of "Old X. K." The paper contained a poem of welcome, but nobody ever heard that poem. Kavanagh scooped it with rushing hand, as he would have captured an offending insect, and tore it up.

"I want no honors like this! A riot and raving and roaring! Have ye no manners? Away with ye! If I hear another yawp from that band I'll stuff the tooters down the throats of them that toot."

They did not understand his passion or the cause of this resentment. But they were accustomed to obey the word of John Kavanagh. And the little priest went here and there among them, hurrying, with a word about their master's illness and another word about the respect which should be shown to private matters of the family.

"It's like enough he has been getting some new ideas down-country about the right way to be genteel," admitted the man named Mike. "But by the snub-line that peeled the leg of old McCarty, if he does act annyways sick, much as I hate to doubt the word of the priest! Go ask old Doc March, after the way he has been fanned."

Kavanagh and his daughter passed through the silent ranks which were opened to let them walk on their way to the mansion on the hill. The old man's face was gloomy, but Clare's honest and winning smiles for all in the range of her vision helped to take some of the sting out of the father's displeasure.

Dumphy trudged behind them, lugging his master's big valise. "Old X. K.'s" anger passed quickly and with it went his fictitious strength. His shoulders sagged forward and he stumbled as he walked. The afterglow served the subdued throng on the station platform; their eyes were on him as he struggled up the hill.

"But he *is* sick," insisted Mulkern. "Do you say he isn't? Is that the way John Kavanagh would walk home with his own colleen if all the grit and glory hadn't been knocked out of him by their damn' Temiscouata popple?"

Doctor March had recovered his self-possession along with what was left of his hat. "But he has taken his toll for that!" He raised his voice so that all might hear, for Kavanagh was at a safe distance. "Listen all, till I tell how he polished the ugly mug of old Marthorn himself! 'Twas a stirring sight and it will make you proud of him!"

Therefore, as a minstrel might sing of the exploits of a champion afield, the doctor stood there in the midst of them and made the twilight eloquent with his chant of derring-do.

"After that it's 'most a wonder that he didn't feel an appetite for music by the band," averred Mike.

"But why don't ye show some sense in the case of a man that's sick?" demanded Mulkern.

All of them indorsed that sentiment and forgave; even Romeo Shank was repentant while he hunted in the gloom for the scraps of his poem.

"The women's part" of the house on the hill was open and lighted and Elisiane Sirois was installed there as housekeeper, according to orders left by Kavanagh.

"Hereafter ye're cookee—only that—Dumphy! See that the water-pails are full and that she has plenty of dry kindlings. However, when I have the taste for waffles ye shall make 'em! And the beans from the bean-hole! No woman knows the trick of it!"

After supper Dumphy brought chairs to the porch, and father and daughter sat there, hand in hand, making holy rite of the home-coming by a silence which words would have profaned. Tulandic had mellowed the thunderous tones with which it boisterously hailed the advent of spring. It was as if June had put up protesting finger in order that the frothing falls might not drown out her

more peaceful voices. Fireflies spangled the slopes and the hollows, drifting sparks of radiance. Whippoorwills lilted here and there, and a night-jar boomed high in air. Subtly dominating all the scents was the far-flung, penetrating odor of resinous logs; Kavanagh knew that his booms were filling with the rush of the X. K. drive.

When the moon's crescent dipped behind the shaggy crest of Moose-mane Hill he patted her cheeks and kissed her forehead. And then, in the room hallowed for her by childhood memories, she slept dreamlessly.

Morning brought her fresh content. She was mistress of the mansion. In her other life there she had been merely an indulged tenant. Now, without words, but by his manner, her father made her feel that she was the acknowledged and responsible head of the establishment. That fact changed the whole aspect of her home and her life at Ste. Agathe. She found occupation and developed promptly the interest which attaches to authority. Everybody responded eagerly to the radiance of her countenance; by word and look they all told her that they were glad she was at home again. Even the tame fox and the contemplative bobcat bestowed grave stare of favor on her.

By some sort of subtle surrender her father put himself under her domination from the first. He remained constantly at the house, not chafing under any restraint, but manifestly enjoying the situation and grateful for the opportunity to be always with her. "It's a bit of a rest I need, and let 'em do the running to me, after this!"

Therefore he administered affairs from his barrel-chair, a throne with a moose-hide for royal drapery.

Clare Kavanagh had daily opportunity to observe, to study, to know the men who came; she heard what they said and what replies her father gave. She listened to his

comments on them and on matters of their business after they had gone. She was not consciously seeking to master all the details of her father's affairs for the purpose of offering him assistance of any kind, but her awakened fealty made her eager to understand all the matters in which he took interest.

Her attentiveness delighted him.

But every now and then he checked himself, asking forgiveness for "feeding chips and sawdust to my girl. But, sure, I get to 'clattering and ye're too polite to say me nay."

On these occasions he eyed her keenly as if he were testing her real interest and the measure of her contentment there in the Toban. Always, hiding the feeling as best he could, he was showing wistful anxiety to be assured that she was happy, that he had not wrecked her peace of mind when he committed the act that, in his estimation, had made him a pariah so far as the outside world was concerned. In condemning himself back to banishment in the Toban he had brought her with him, and even her passionate appeal to him in her room at Manor Verona had not cleared away all the black shadows of his regret. He was hungry for more assurance that she did not feel that she had been robbed of what her education and trained tastes entitled her to enjoy in a wider sphere than the Toban.

She gave him that assurance more effectively by demeanor than by mere words.

It seemed to him that all his business affairs adjusted themselves in more tractable shape when she was handy by.

"It's the smile of her," asserted old Waddell, stumpage-buyer. "I've done business with John Kavanagh for

twenty years. I had got hardened to doing it as he would have it done. I never thought I'd enjoy doing it—but it has come to that! I leave my club at the foot of the hill—and he must have whittled his up—it's nowhere in sight any more!"

One day she delighted him so immeasurably, stirring in him such mixed emotions, that he laughed and wept at the same time. She brought him sheets of figures which proved conclusively that by another system of "topping out," as related to the log scale in use on the Toban waters, his stumpage contracts would yield him additional profits besides conserving growth.

"Saints o' glory, girl! How did ye ever come to know it?"

"It's only a sum in board measure, daddy!"

"But there's old Figger-four never waking up in all these years!"

"We won't blame him. We'll blame the old-fashioned, careless ways and the rut folks are apt to get into. There were so many trees in the old days that folks didn't try to be very exact."

"By guess and by gorry! That's been the way too long in the woods. Ay, I have seen ye sit listening to us, like a woodpecker with ear cocked at the trunk of a tree, and so now ye've caught us old, burrowing worms!" He waved the papers like a banner. "Wait till I tell 'em! Wait! It's my own girl has done it."

"Well, if you tell them, daddy, be sure to explain that the men who *buy* stumpage will also make more money by increasing their cut. Otherwise they'll think you sent me away to school only for the purpose of learning new ways to make money for the Kavanaghs."

"Bless glory, child! I want to make 'em all love ye,

up here!" He wiped the tears from his eyes. He smashed the flat of his hand on the arm of the chair. A hope which was only half grown and which he had been nourishing in secret was struggling to burst from him. "Clare, colleen! Ali my life I have worked hard to build up the thing that the X. K. mark stands for! All my life! Hard work! No playtime! And no boy to take my place! 'But what good whether it lasts after ye're gone?' says one. 'Now ye're done with it, let it go,' says another."

He raised himself out of his chair with effort and walked to the door. It was near the noon hour and all of Ste. Agathe's kitchen chimneys, smoking with the dinner fires, sent up incense to the god of the village's prosperity. Far yonder, in the broad stretches of the river, the acres of his marshaled logs made brown sheathing for the silver flood from bank to bank. The flashing oars of the bateaux, the waving pick-poles, the men who toiled, all were of him and for him. Were he hale and strong, his apprehensions as to the future of all this would not have been so depressing. In the full sense of power he would not have looked ahead to worry. Somehow it had always seemed that the X. K. machine would go on forever. But day by day he had seen the bones of his hands outline themselves more and more under the relaxing skin; the hands trembled unless he set all his will to the task of holding them steady. His eyes were sinking into dark hollows. It seemed as if all his defenses against old age had been shattered by that one blow over the heart.

"I understand, father," she said, at his side.

"Yes, ye can, because ye're my own girl! Ye just showed a man's knowledge of the right things to know. I

was nigh forgetting myself. It's not for this I have trained you, though! You shall have the money out of it all. That will be best. It's what I have always planned."

"But you mustn't talk as if both of us were not going to enjoy—"

"I'm getting done, child—I'm getting done with my part of it."

"Please! Please don't!" she pleaded, distressed.

"Whatever our faults, we're no hands to lie to each other. Thank God, I've faced men and all things without asking other than a man's fair chance. I can face death in just the same way!"

"Yes, when it comes," she told him, gravely, too sensible to deal in false hopes and platitudes with him.

He was silent for a long time, his eyes on his possessions.

"Daddy, I know what you're thinking about! I can talk it for you. It makes me so proud to have you overestimate me! That shows how much you love me."

"But I wouldn't have ye do it! No, no, darlin'! It was not that! I have terrible dreams o' nights! But, glory be, I think I'm having worse dreams when I'm awake."

"I'm afraid it is a dream, as it stands just now," she admitted. Then she suited mock-heroic pose to words.

"In a story-book or a play the heroine would stand up in front of her father and fold her arms and cry: 'I—I will take the burden from your shoulders as a noble and sacred heritage! I will achieve what you have left unfinished!' And then, if she wasn't a complete idiot, she would add, to herself, 'And I'll probably succeed in making a fool of myself and a botch of the whole business.'" She finished with laughter that made comedy of

the situation. She grabbed him around the neck and kissed his cheeks alternately. "You dear old doting dada o' mine! You're boss of the X. K. and you're going to be boss for a long, long time. I just won't let you get morbid. And all the time I'll stick to you close as the bark on a beech. I'll listen to every word you say about your business. It will be my post-grad. course and you shall be Professor John Xavier Kavanagh, D.O.D.I.T.W."

He replied to her gaiety with a grin of sheer delight.

"It sounds grander than the letters on your diplomy," he chuckled.

"It is grander! For it means 'Dearest Old Daddy In The World'!" She fairly sang the words at him. "And then some day—maybe—you'll pat me on the back, after I have passed the last examination, and you'll say to me, 'My boy!'—remember, daddy, it must be 'My boy!'—you'll say, 'My boy! I do believe, dod butter it, that you can now go ahead and do much without making a fool of yourself or a botch of my business!' And I'll say—"

"Go on, now, ye blarneying tike, what will ye say?" he demanded, all his melancholy washed away by the flood of her merriment.

"Oh, I won't say it to you! I'll turn on my heel like this! I'll stick me t'umbs in the belt o' me jacket! I'll begin on Dumphy! I'll swagger out to him and I'll say, 'Dumphy!'"

She shouted the name in tone of arrogant authority. Dumphy, with his two pails of water, was at the corner of the house. He set them down and stared open-mouthed, meek, and abashed. They were too much absorbed in their little play to notice him.

"Dumphy! Mind ye here! If ye over-brown my

waffles as ye did last time, I'll have at ye with a twist of warp, and first I'll knot a pebble in the end of it!" Then she swung in her stride and faced the cowering cook. "Oh, Dumphy, I'm sorry," she called, in confused apology. "But you must not mind! It was only a bit of a rehearsal."

Dumphy wagged his head, not understanding; nor did he understand why John Kavanagh was holding to the side of the door guffawing as the vassal had never heard his master laugh before. "On your way," gasped Kavanagh, "or the looks of that mug o' yours will kill me before my time." The cook picked up his pails and escaped.

"You ought to have let me explain to him, daddy," she protested.

"Hold your whist, colleen! Let it be! He'll pass the word that ye're your father's girl, and it's a good word to go abroad in the Toban. It'll help back up the diplomacy that Professor Kavanagh will give ye!"

"Sure," said Dumphy to the first man in whose ear he could pour the information, "the smile of her it would warm a pan of biscuit, and the laugh of her is so light it could be whipped into frosting for a bride-cake. But, hail ye and repent! The edge of the tongue of her—it's the Kavanagh's! And only about one iron-set of waffles! I had thought she didn't notice! Saints protect the omadhaun who does worse to her than waffles!"

CHAPTER IX

What may happen when the young man rides afar and the big moon calls to a princess of the Mellicites.

FROM the nature of his office Abner Kezar was Kavanagh's most regular visitor; daily he came limping up the hill, his papers fluttering in his hand. On the first day his eager scrutiny of her, his attentions which amounted almost to fawning obsequiousness, and his questionings might have affected her composure had she not reflected that his long association with her father had undoubtedly made him, in his own estimation, almost one of the family. He brought her flowers from the little garden which was his sole diversion; he brought gifts—now a sweet-grass basket, bought from a strolling Indian of the Mellicite tribe, or a string of wampum, secured from some poor redskin desperate enough to surrender such a sacred heirloom. It was not necessary for him to bring his grandson. That young man hurried to her of his own accord the moment he came back from a long business trip and heard that Clare Kavanagh, though educated, was the handsomest girl the folks of the Toban had ever seen.

For the first time in the case of a young woman Donald Kezar was honestly deferential; his attitude toward Clare was not assumed. He felt that she was a superior person, though she promptly, at the very outset, met him just

where they had parted—on the plane of frank comradeship. He had expected airs and affectation. Therefore she had him at a disadvantage the moment she put out her hand and grasped his in cordial grip.

"Daddy says that Black Tom is hearty and healthy, though he's four years older. He's waiting for me! I hope you have been waiting, too, Don, for more of our rides together."

The red of pleased surprise mounted to his cheeks. His flush and his confusion gave her an impression of boyish ingenuousness and her smile revealed her approbation.

"I was afraid you had sort of forgotten us folks up here," he said, awkwardly.

"Buhl!" snapped the father. "Out on ye, Donald, for a traitor for thinking that!"

She felt, hearing that loyal defense, another of those pangs of regret which pained her when she remembered how nearly she had been a traitor even to her own father. And, just as she had striven remorsefully to make up by added affection for her shortcomings in the matter of her father, so she extended extra graciousness to her early friends of the Toban.

From that delightful and most encouraging interview with her young Kezar hurried down to his grandfather, who was pottering about his garden, taking advantage of his after-supper leisure.

"There's the girl, gran'dad—there's the one for me! I don't care if she *has* been through college—it hasn't spoiled her. And she wants me to go riding with her, just as we used to. It all looks mighty good to me!"

The old man came to the fence, stepping carefully between the rows of his old-fashioned posies. "Oh, Donnie

boy, if you could only know how happy I have been ever since she came home! I knew she was for you when I saw her. I feel it more and more every day. She is good and kind! She does not hold her head high. She has come back home because she wanted to come back. She has told me so."

"Yes, she told me the same. Of course, there's never any telling just what slant a girl will take, but I've never been thrown down by one yet!"

"Don't talk that way, Donnie! It doesn't fit the talk you make about Clare. You may forget and say it where others may hear. We mustn't have them telling tales to her, now that you have become my own good boy once more. And you are keeping yourself away from those who can tell tales about you, aren't you?" he inquired, anxiously.

Donald showed impatience. "Of course I am! Say, look here! You're doing too much worrying about me, gran'dad. You even got all fussed up about that X. K. check. And lately you've been worrying because I couldn't pull the money out as quick as we had hoped. But to-day I handed you back the money and we have split five thousand profit between us, haven't we? Now don't do any more worrying. I have shown you that I can do business. I'll do it in this case."

"You shall have my help, Donnie! You're my own boy and are doing just as I would have you do." He clutched the pickets and thrust his face close. "Did you notice John? Something's afool of him."

"He's in a bad way, according to my notion."

"He is coming to the end, boy! It's in his face and in his voice. I've watched many of them in past times. The pump is clogging." He patted his hand on his

breast. "She needs somebody like you. You are showing that you can do business. I have always worked for his interests; I'll work for hers. She needs you, I say. It's the one great thing for me to bring about. She can't handle it when it's all left on her hands."

"But don't you suppose there's somebody amongst those down-river rats who has his line on her?" His eyes narrowed with the thoughts his jealousy suggested. "Just think! She has been away all this time! She must have seen a lot of slick ones"

"I tell you she has never mentioned any in her letters"

"But most often girls do those things on the sly," the lover said, his own experience in such matters putting teeth in his gnawing suspicions.

"The mail comes through my hands. I'll watch for you, Donnie. Yes, I'll even lift the flap and look," he whispered. "It's for her own best good to save her from one of those toads. She is meant for you, and you're going to have her!"

"If one of 'em comes here chasing her up, then you can bet that some hospital will get a case," declared young Kezar.

He started away after that ugly declaration.

"There's nothing to do at the stable," called his grandfather. "I fed your horse and bedded him."

"Much obliged. I'm going to use him."

"But, Donald!"

"Don't think that every time I ride out of this yard I'm starting for the Portage. I tell you you needn't worry about me!" It was an insulting repulse. The grandfather went back to his posies, culling here and there. He was gathering a nosegay for Clare. On his knees, he peered after the young man when Donald

galloped away. "I don't believe their stories! I don't believe them! It's jealousy. The boy is seeing the right way now. And he is showing what he can do!" In the mail for the early train of the next day the old man had placed a letter returning the amount of the X. K. check to Kavanagh's balance in the bank. Now he could look John Kavanagh in the face again; he could give his posies to Kavanagh's daughter without feeling like a thief hiding guilt. His boy had promised and had redeemed the promise!

The boy rode far that night, following down the winding road beside the river. The July moon had filled the bowl of the earlier crescent with white radiance which overflowed upon the wooded stretches and the shimmering waters. It was a wonderful night for a lover to be abroad with his thoughts. Faint and far trillings from ponds where the sleeping lilies were serenaded from the broad, floating leaves by minstrel frogs were sounds which made for pensive loneliness, which is the dearest mood for lovers' contemplation. But Kezar's mood was plainly not fitted for the peace of that night. He muttered occasionally, scowled at the stars while he pondered, and kicked irritable heels into the flanks of his horse when the lagging animal nipped at the wayside leaves.

Late in the evening he dismounted and stabled his horse in a bark lean-to close to the river. A large island divided the stream and a narrow beach whose white sand showed many footprints suggested that here a ferry made its landing. There was another suggestion of a ferry in a bar of iron suspended from the branch of a birch and clearly outlined against the white of the trunk. The handle of a small mallet was stuck into a cleft in the tree.

The iron gave forth mellow resonance when Kezar struck it with the mallet. It was evident that he was sounding his own individual call, for he grouped the blows and paused carefully between the measured beats.

It was as if he had evoked a fairy or a dryad from the shadows on the opposite shore. A white figure was limned for a moment against the gloom cast by the trees, and a call, softly modulated, came to him. It was a sound which fitted the hour and the place; it was strangely similar to the weird, fant, and far call of the loon—the night call. Then the white figure hurried down to the strand and a canoe came out into the full glory of the moonlit river. The dipping paddle flashed radiance in his eyes; the blade shuttled rapidly, showing the haste of the one who wielded it.

The young man, waiting on the shore, did something which would not be sanctioned by even the most lax interpretation of the liturgy of lovers: he lighted a fresh cigar from the shortened butt of the one he had been smoking—so he waited for the girl. It was a girl! She was standing in the canoe with the poise and pose of an expert, paddling with free strokes. As she came on he surveyed her gloomily. In her white garb, with the silver water gleaming all about her and behind her, she deserved more cordial and favoring gaze. In her grace and strength and bold agility she was a part of that great outdoors which surrounded them.

She called to him when she was near the shore. Her voice was low, but the thrill in it expressed passionate impatience. "The moon tell me. She tell me that you come to me! Alloonoh! Mine!"

With the mere inflection of her voice she wreathed with meaning those last two words so that they became exposi-

tion of her longing, her tenderness, and her utter devotion. He said nothing. He did not take the cigar from his mouth. She drove the nose of the canoe upon the shore, leaped out, and cast herself upon him with an abandon which took no note of his coldness.

"The moon! You look at her and she tell you to come. Is it not so?" She spoke the words slowly in low and tense tones. A touch of accent marked her speech. She added a few tender, cooing words in the border patois, a language made up of the Norman French of the old Acadians, with words from the limited vocabulary of the Abnakis and the Mellicite tribes.

He looked down into her face; the dark eyes she raised to him brimmed with happy tears. The masses of her hair, black and glossy, disarranged by her haste, were so low on her forehead that she was gazing up at him through tendrils which strayed. "*Oui*, yes! She told you. When her face grow big and she turn it this way, I come here and wait. I know she tell you! Kiss me! Kiss me! *Chéri! Mine!*"

He removed the cigar from his mouth and bent down to her. With arms about his neck, she set her lips upon his and clung there avidly. Whether he returned any of the passion of her embrace and caress she did not know or notice. He himself did not know whether he was responding. His mind was wholly occupied with another thought. "An Indian! My God! what ever possessed me?"

He had not asked that question of himself in the early days of his association with Lola Nicola Hébert. There were two generations of Acadians between her and Noel the Bear, chief of the Mellicites. One easily forgot that she had Indian blood. For she was the daughter of

Onésime Hébert, who owned the great island and in whose house, set in the midst of broad acres, there were family heirlooms of the seventeenth century, brought in the broad-bellied sea-wagons from the ports of Normandy. She was alluringly, dashingly, deliciously French, he had felt. He had wooed her with a fervor which equaled her own.

It was only old Noel the Bear who insisted that her name should be simply Lola Nicola, for she was princess of her tribe, appointed so by him. Even though she was Onésime's daughter she was the old chief's great-granddaughter and he always claimed that her allegiance to her tribe overshadowed her mere family relations, so jealously and bitterly did Noel view the passing of the ancient Mellicites, absorbed one by one in an alien race. Noel the Bear, at one hundred and two years of age, went about on his affairs as usual. He was so wrinkled that it seemed as if the talons of time had viciously gouged his cheeks as hint to him that he'd better lie down and die; his jowls hung like flapping curtains from his high cheekbones. But Noel the Bear had no notion of dying. Each autumn, after the tribal Feast of the Maize, he went alone into the wilderness, fasted for ten days, and then ate the tail of a beaver, cooked with incantations and charms spoken and woven about the pot in which it simmered. "Huh!" said Noel the Bear, looking down on the world, for he was tall above the average and held himself straight, "no need die. Beaver tail. Indian medicine."

All at once, for Kezar, the girl seemed especially associated with the old Indian. She was not so much Lola Hébert, daughter of the farmer, as she was the princess of the tribe; the manner in which she had just come to him, standing in her canoe and paddling like a Mellicite brave,

had made him frown. It suggested her ancestry. Once it would have fascinated him, as all her other ways had caught his fancy and stirred his passion at the first.

"Quit it!" he muttered against her lips. "I can't breathe!"

"It's only a short kiss for so long time away from me." In her own warmth she still refused to notice his aloofness. She began to scatter little pecks of kisses on his cheeks. "Like the stars on the sky! They make the sky so much prettier."

"My face isn't much like the sky," he said, with petulance.

"Oh, but it will be so if you make it blue. You are not so glad to be here, eh?" she asked, wistfully.

"Of course I'm glad to see you. What do you think I'm riding away down here for?" But he failed to muster fervor; he knew in his own heart why he had ridden down.

It was her mood to make fetish of the time of the big moon. He feared what she might do if he did not come to her. He knew something about the dangers in her temperament when she was crossed. In his new state of mind, in his new apprehension in regard to publicity in his affairs, he was not of a mind to provoke any explosion.

He put his cigar in his mouth. Its fire was out—it was cold. He muttered an oath and drew back from her, seeking a match.

"But you have so much time for that when I am not in your arms," she remonstrated.

"I am nervous. Smoking quiets me."

She was silent while he relighted the tobacco.

"Oh, I like it that you shall have comfort, though

have not the kisses. Now! Now! In the canoe, quick! I shall ferry you!"

"But see here, Lola! I haven't the time to-night! I have only ridden down to— I say, come over here and sit on the bank with me. I've got to be hurrying back in a little while."

"Hurry back—in a little while!" she repeated, incredulously. He went to the bank and sat down. "Come!" she pleaded. "The hours are so short. The sun comes too quick. Now the moon is here for us."

"I can't stay—not to-night, Lola. I've only run down to tell you that I love you—love you just the same. But I'm awful busy these days and you must be patient if you don't see me quite so often. If I'm kept back from coming, you remember what I've just told you. Be patient. I'll get around as soon and as often as I possibly can."

She did not seem to be paying much attention to his excuses or to grasp what he was saying.

She kneeled down in front of him. "But why don't you come in my canoe instead of sit here? *Chéri!* It is now late. The sun will soon be here."

"Listen! I tell you—"

"All day I have gathered flowers. There are roses. There are dog-lilies. And daisies and some of the first clovers! I shall surprise you. You shall see and laugh!"

"But, Lola," he protested, impatiently, "you mustn't go to trimming that camp up in such gaudy style. Your folks will be suspecting something."

"Come and see! It spoils all to tell ahead." She seemed resolved to pay little heed to his manner or his words. "Come and see!"

"Confound it, get what I'm saying into your head! I can't come across there to-night. I *can't!*"

"There's the night for us. It can belong to nobody else."

"Furthermore, I'm not going to let you take any more chances on staying out, as I have done. It's dangerous."

"But when you coaxed me to come to the camp you said it was not dangerous," she cried, her eyes opening on him. "You said they would not be coming to my room—because my *père* and *mère* are tired and sleep so sound."

"But I have been thinking it over. It isn't safe."

"But if they do come! If they do find out! We shall have something to say. Have we not?" she asked, with pride.

"Oh yes. We can tell 'em that, of course. But think what a devilish row it's going to stir up! The story will be up to Sainte Agathe in fifteen minutes—news travels through the air in these parts."

"Yet sometime the news must get to Sainte Agathe."

"But I have explained to you about my grandfather—how notional he is—how he'd probably give all his money to somebody else. He's rich," lied the young man, magnifying Abner Kezar's modest estate.

"Money or my father or my mother! You come first, before them! We shall always have each other. We shall not be sorry."

"No, but we've got to use a little common sense and handle this thing like we'd handle eggs. Let's be especially careful from now on. And then it will come out all right—give it time. That's the way to do." He tried hard to sound convincing.

"You shall tell me over there! I can listen there and understand! Come!" she begged, piteously. "It was to be my surprise. But I will tell. I have twined the flowers on the walls. They spell words '*Je t'aime*,' say the roses. The daisies say, 'Alloonoh. Mine.' And I have twined D and L—"

"Damn it," he raged, "you'll ruin us! Go tear that stuff down. Somebody will be sticking nose into that camp and the whole thing will be guessed at and gabbled about all up and down the river."

"You will not come to see?" This insistence made him more angry; he forgot the time when he had been much more insistent on his own part.

"I do see I can't talk reason with you to-night, Lola! This moon and love business seem to have got you locoed. It's late and I don't propose to have you taking any more risks. Here!" He rose and pulled her to her feet, drew her to him and kissed her. "Now you be a good little girl—my own little girl for this night, and trot home. I'll come down again right away—yes, right away." He patted his finger on her lips. "And don't you let one littlest lisp get out. If you can keep this thing all tight and close between us two for a while I can arrange everything." He had not the least idea of how he was to arrange it, but the fact did not moderate the earnestness of his assurances. He realized that he must play for time.

He kissed her again, quickly, impatiently. "Remember! Mum's the word till I can fix things. Then it will be all right." He plucked her arms from about his neck. "Good night! Don't be silly!"

"You are leaving me here alone in the night. I am afraid," she wailed, when he hurried away. It was the

despairing impulse of the woman in her—appeal to his sense of protection. But it availed her nothing in this case. He knew her bold self-reliance too well.

"You're all right! You can be home in a jiffy!" He almost added, in his irritation, "The dark doesn't scare an Indian!" That conviction, though he did not voice it, made him cold to her entreaties. He went on his way; he was embarrassed by her presence and her pleas; he had not perfected his falsehood so that he could tell it under the searching inquiry of her eyes.

The cadences of her piteous voice followed him when he mounted his horse. "I'm afraid! I'm afraid!" He was glad when he was out of hearing.

The girl stood where he had left her, with wide-flung, empty arms. Then she kneeled and put her arms about the prow of her little canoe, as if she were trying to comfort herself with its companionship.

Out of the shadows near by another canoe came drifting slowly with the current of the river. A young man, unmistakably an Indian, sat in the craft, his idle paddle across the thwarts in front of him.

"I am here. You need not be afraid!" He caught at a branch of the alders which had shielded him and stayed the drift of the canoe.

She raised her head and regarded him in silence; the moonlight sparkled in the tears upon her cheeks. Then anger displaced her grief. "Your four years at college—they have not rooted the Indian out of you, Paul Sabatis! Lurking and spying!"

"And they did not root out of me my love for you, Lola."

"I do not want your love."

"I know it."

"Then why are you spying on me? You came there this night and hid! Is it not so?"

"Yes!"

"You have been watching me before, eh?"

"Yes!"

She rose and shook the hair back from her eyes, standing at bay before the sacred secret of her life. "What right have you?"

"Only what I have taken on myself," he replied, humbly.

"But you are nothing to me—nothing!"

"I know it." His meekness did not protect him from her anger.

"You say, 'I know it'! Over and over, 'I know it'! You know so much, eh? Because you have been at your college, eh? Perhaps you know so much because you lurk and spy! Yes, that's it! But you don't know anything except to be *un coquin*!"

He did not reply.

"*Mais, ouï! Poltron! Fripon!*" She went to the very edge of the river and shook her fists at him.

"If I seem so to you I'll not deny," he told her. "Yes, I am coward—rascal!"

"You are!" she blazed.

"But I am not a thief!" He suddenly broke the bonds of his repression. "I saw he was coming to steal. God! I have been on fire here!" He beat his fist against his breast. "I have tried to think how I might keep him from stealing, but he has stolen!"

"Does one steal what is given—free gift?" the girl demanded, insolently, her anger driving her far in defense.

"But he has stolen your happiness! He stole it, I say. He has run away with your happiness. I saw! I heard!"

"Yes, you have seen much because you have spied. I know what you think. You think I am a lost girl. One like so many of the others! You will go about and say it because you are jealous." There was a note of fear in her voice. She apprehended danger from this lover whom she had rebuffed.

"I know him! I have been upon his track. No, all the Indian has not been educated out of me at college," he agreed, bitterly. "I have hate in me. I could kill him. Be it as you say, that it was a free gift! But you have given him too much, Lola; you have given him too much!"

"I will not have you think I am that! No, no! It is insult! Nothing is too much to give to the husband I love!"

With a thrust of his paddle he drove his canoe to the sand and stared up at her.

"You need not look at me as if I lie! It is the truth."

"But the banns—and the wedding—"

She straightened proudly. "I have no need of such! You are an Indian, Paul Sabatis. You know the laws of a tribe."

"I am a Tarratine. I know the laws. I have the keeping of the leather bag—all our laws and our treaties," he said, with as much pride as she showed.

"My great-grandfather is Noel the Bear, chief! He married us. With the old rites."

"But such marriages—the laws in these days!" he stammered.

"My great-grandfather says that the tribe's laws were before the other laws. He is bitter because his tribe is forgetting the old laws and the old authority. He was

glad to bind us when we went to him and told him we loved each other."

"But your—your—husband!" He choked on the word. "With his race a marriage is—"

"He swore the holy oath, dividing the feather and the fur, standing under the ashen staff." She put a trembling hand in the bosom of her gown and pulled out a small object, holding it up for him to see. "It is the sacred token. He has its other half. He is my husband. Paul—Paul, he loves me and I love him! *Père* and *mère* do not know! You will not tell? It will come out all right. He tells me it will. But we must wait. But I can be happy while I wait, for he is my husband—*mon mari*." Her voice caressed the words. "It is not like waiting while *père* and *mère* and the rich *grandpère* make all the plans. We love each other so! You will not tell?" She held out her hands to him in entreaty.

"No, I will not tell."

"But you have been angry—you have spied—"

"I shall never do it again, Lola. I did not understand."

"And you will be my friend?"

"Yes! You have made your choice. So I am not allowed to love you the other way any more. If I did I would be as bad as the men who take away happiness and peace from girls. You have made your choice! That is all! It was your right. I can say nothing."

"I ask your forgiveness for what I said," she begged, contritely. "I was frightened—he has asked me to hide it—"

He forced a half-smile. "Would I be angry because the mother partridge came to me, flustering her feathers? No, no! I would go my way and make believe I had not seen one of the little ones scurrying to cover. And so

now I will go my way, Lola! I will be your true friend—because I have loved you. I turn my eyes away from what you hide. I'll turn my face to you when you need me and ask for me. That is a pledge. But I hope you'll never need me."

"I shall have my husband," she said. "He loves me."

The two remained there in silence for some time, he with folded arms looking down into the water, she with glowing face staring up at the big moon.

When they heard the dull throb of hoofbeats on the roadway they did not seek to avoid observation. They were like children, secure in the consciousness of their innocence. Travelers were common enough on the river thoroughfare. When Lola heard Donald Kezar's voice she felt no sense of being in a questionable position; she felt only leaping joy because he was returning, and she turned in her tracks, faced in the direction of the voice, and waited. Almost instantly the young man and his companion, also on horseback, were in sight, for the roadway was soft and the horses could be heard only a short distance away. The two were riding slowly and Kezar was saying how glad he was that he had met the friend and now had a good excuse to turn back and go to the Portage for the night.

In his own mind Kezar was sure that the girl had hurried home, but when he turned a careless glance down the slope of the shore he saw her. At the same time he saw the Indian in the canoe.

He pulled up sharp. Sudden and ugly inspiration found words for him. "So this is what goes on behind my back, is it? Wallin, you know that girl down there, don't you?"

"Sure I do."

"Remember what you have seen here. I may need a witness. Come on!"

He drove his horse into a gallop, paying no heed to her choking cries.

She ran, calling to him. A root tripped her and she fell, face down.

Sabatis leaped out of his canoe and lifted her before she was able to rise by her own efforts. She struggled, but he restrained her. "He has gone far! You cannot overtake him."

Her forehead was bleeding from contact with a sharp stone. He stroked the wound gently with his handkerchief. "Don't cry! Don't, Lola. He did not understand. It was all my fault. I will go to him and make him understand. I will be your true friend in it. You shall not worry."

"But he knows how I love him. He knows I would not be with another man," she sobbed.

"Yes, he knows it! He will be sorry in a little while."

"Then he will come back here! I'll wait for him."

By the setting of his jaw muscles Paul Sabatis revealed that his opinion of Donald Kezar did not give that young man credit for so much decency. "No, Lola, he is going with a man—perhaps on business—and he will not come to-night. And it is late. You ought to be at home. Come! I'll see you to the other side and across the broad field!"

"And you'll go and tell him what a mistake he has made?"

"Yes!"

"But go now—so that you may find him very soon. It is breaking my heart to know that he is unhappy. I

do not need you, Paul! Find him and tell him, so that he may not be unhappy. I say, I do not need you!" She pulled herself away from him. "Go! Hurry!" Her impatience was making her unkind. He sighed and went to his canoe.

He turned his head when he was well down to the next bend of the river. She was paddling slowly across to the Hébert shore, from which, such a short time before, she had set forth in eager and passionate haste. Her words, "I do not need you!" sent sorrowful echoes through his consciousness.

He rested his paddle and put his hands to the ache in his throat.

He knew that he had seen ruthless satiety toss away the priceless jewel of a girl's adoring love. And though that jewel would make his own life rich and radiant, he was forbidden to search for it, even though he searched on his knees, patiently and humbly. The friendship which he had pledged was now asked to perform a service which meant bitter humiliation and must prove to be useless effort, he knew. The pride of Sabatis ached as poignantly as did his throat. He understood what kind of a fellow Kezar was in his arrogance of strength and in his brute complacency in estimation of his ability to win women. Paul had heard him talk. And, by that same token, the fact that Paul Sabatis was a Bachelor of Arts and entitled to usage as a gentleman would not weigh against the contemptuous opinion held by Kezar. Education furnished sufficient torch for his temper, usually; education combined with an Indian had drawn from him remarks which had come to the ears of Paul Sabatis. Even the Indian's prowess as a football champion had not moderated the Kezar disdain.

It was not a pleasant outlook for the poor boy who paddled down the moonlit reaches; but he set himself to his task, steeled his courage against the future, and drove his blade deep in the flashing waters.

In her service!

CHAPTER X

And Paul Sabatis paddled far, but the "White Lily's" poor secret belonged in the moonlight's radiance rather than in the noisome barroom at Old Joel's place.

IT was the regular monthly gala-night in Old Joel's place at Portage Beaulieu; "Benson Nute was down." That phrase had a significance of its own among the border roisterers who relished the regular baiting of Old Joel, the half-breed publican.

Benson Nute always came down from his hermit's cabin on Scraped Mountain when the moon was full—and, to the best of his ability, in the way of drinks, he emulated the moon. Then the occasion became a festal one for all save Old Joel.

The bald brow of Scraped Mountain looms above Portage Beaulieu, a red brow like a drunkard's blood-suffused forehead, as red as Nute's face when he swaggered up and down the big room of the border tavern, sweat streaking his face, even as the iron waters of Scraped Mountain drip everlastingly down the ledges from the springs. The soil, the duff, the scattered twigs, have been ferruginated by those waters. For a quarter of a century Nute's rude smelter flamed against the night heavens and sent up its tower of smoke by day. He had made money from his gleanings on the mountain slope; at any rate, he had money enough to enable him to keep up

a piece of exasperating eccentricity in the case of Old Joel. Perhaps there was never anything just like it in the way of persistent aggravation and long-continued abuse.

Once upon a time Old Joel and Benson Nute began to play a game, each boasting of prowess. They played for hours, and when men crowded around to look on, applauding, they raised the stakes, they drank much whisky and played without sleep or food until Old Joel dropped senseless from his chair. When that happened he had lost to Benson Nute every dollar of his money, his tavern, his goods, his barns—everything.

But Benson Nute, insultingly patronizing, refused to take possession or to turn Old Joel out. Nor would he accept compromise or any payments. Each month, on the full of the moon, he came down from Scraped Mountain and paraded his ownership, bawling coarse speeches at the publican, bragging, blustering, threatening, snapping his fingers, red with iron rust, under Old Joel's nose. He came down, hooting and boasting, galloping his horse, standing up in his rattling cart, riding along the winding road beside Blood Brook, the stream which gathered the overflow of the springs and daubed the rocks in its course with rust.

Some freakish sense of grudge, vanity, or spirit of tyranny was tickled by this sort of ownership. He enjoyed his position with all the relish of a fanatic for a hobby. He liked to feel that a crowd collected each month to look on at the show he furnished. The talk about it along the border gave him joy. Every year the thing became a more luscious morsel for his perverted taste. Mere money would not buy for him a slave and a tyrant's privileges. The publican saved, gathered his dollars,

offered them with entreaty. But Nute merely threw money back at the desperate debtor. Old Joel, timid in his own behalf, cowed by the burly man from the hill, afraid to take steps which might bring the eye of authority upon illicit practices of his resort, made no effort to force settlement through the law. But within him, as month followed month and insult was piled on insult, burned a mounting fire, hotter than any flame which streamed up from Nute's smelter.

Kezar and Wallin came late, but Nute had not reached the climax of vociferousness. He furnished an all-night show when he came down; somber Old Joel resigned himself to keep vigil.

"Interest! Interest! That's all I want from you," bawled the creditor, snapping wet fingers across the dripping bar. "Another drink all 'round, Joel! Who the blazes wants money when he can get whisky? Whisky, that's my interest. A Canuck watered your Indian blood for you, Joel, but you can't water my whisky for me. Here! Hand over the bottle. It's mine. All the place is mine. *You* are mine!" Only a few accepted Nute's invitation. Considering the nature of the debt, men in the region felt sympathy for Old Joel and had no wish to assist in extortion. Some of those who drank with the interest-collector slipped money unobtrusively to the half-breed.

A little before midnight Paul Sabatis came in sight of the Portage, paddling around the wide arc of Moosehorn Bend. He scowled and shook his head when he saw the yellow smudge of the oil-lamps in Old Joel's windows; they stained the white radiance of the high moon. The sight of them touched his thoughts with a smirch of shame, for Old Joel was his uncle. However, contriteness mingled

with the shame; Old Joel's money had paid for the young man's education.

When he had swung in to the pull-out place Paul lifted his canoe from the water and overturned it on the rack. Then he resolutely walked into the big room where Benson Nute swayed on unsteady legs and cursed and taunted.

Kezar, his elbows on the bar, his back against it, met the Indian's eyes with a bold and provoking stare. The men in the room were too much interested in themselves and in Nute to pay any attention to the new arrival or to Kezar. When Sabatis slowly tipped back his head, mutely inviting the other to step outside, Kezar smiled. But he did not move from the bar; instead he carelessly beckoned with fanning fingers, not bothering to lift his elbows.

"You're just in time, Sabatis! Congratulations! Come here! I'll buy the drinks."

The Indian shook his head. "I have a little matter to speak of. Will you please step outside?"

"Oh no! There's too much fun in here. I don't want to miss anything."

Sabatis came closer. "It's a message It is important."

"I can guess what it is," stated Kezar, with an impudent grin. "The news of an engagement, eh? You're a lucky chap. Here's my best wishes." He raised his glass and drank.

"You're making a joke of something that's very serious."

"Oh, love is more or less of a joke."

"But I am asking you as politely as I know to come where I can say something in private." The provoking

animus of Kezar was plain, but Sabatis had been meditating long while he paddled down the river. She had intrusted to him a delicate mission and he had resolved to do his best. Nute was bellowing still more offensively and his clamor made shield for the Indian's earnest plea. "I am not come on any affair of mine, sir. I'm sorry you choose to make it seem that way. I do not believe that you misunderstand at all. But I made my promise and I'm keeping it."

"There's no misunderstanding here."

"No, I was sure of that."

"I've got eyes and I can see when a fellow is courting a girl."

"But you know that's not true!"

"It will be a good match, Sabatis."

"I tell you you're joking in a very silly manner." He put his face close. "Your love for her and hers for you—it's none of my business. I have come to tell you what you know—she would not look twice my way. I am nothing. She loves you. I beg you'll go to her very soon. Tell her I did my errand."

Kezar was heated with liquor, his judgment was not clear, but he felt that his need was desperate; he saw here an opportunity to start a story, as woodsmen start a backfire to stop a conflagration. He knew how swiftly the clattering tongues of the border gossips could carry news; he proposed to send something on its way to the ears of Clare Kavanagh.

"Good!" he shouted, and the other voices were stilled. "Sabatis is a happy man. He and Lola Hébert are engaged!"

It came with such vehement rush of speech that Paul was voiceless for a moment. When he attempted furious

denial nobody heard what he said, for Benson Nute had called for three cheers for the "White Lily." Men banged hard palms against the Indian's back, thrust between him and Kezar, hustled him and danced him about the room.

"Drinks on the house! Drinks on the house!" Nute kept barking. "Set 'em up for your nephew, Joel! She's the White Lily, Sabatis!"

"It isn't true—I tell you it isn't true!" But they paid no attention to the despairing protests. He was still struggling with them and protesting when his uncle forced his way to him.

"It isn't true—it's a lie—make them be quiet and listen to me," urged the young man, clutching his uncle's arm. But Old Joel, it was promptly evident, was not interested in his nephew's matrimonial prospects.

"Let that wait, *petit fils!* Let that wait! It's notting. It's only about a demoiselle! But you're here at last when *he's* here! I have try so moch to get you to come before when *he'd* be here." He shook his fist in the direction of the creditor. "Now you must help me. I have pay to have you know somet'ing, eh? Hoi! hush up, you howling devils—all of it!" He shouted till they were silent. "And you keep your tongue in your face!" he roughly commanded Paul when the boy attempted to take advantage of the silence. "This is my time! I have wait for it."

The situation had been effectually taken out of the hands of Sabatis and Kezar.

"You—you—you listen, you damn' *cochon!*" His passion, bursting suddenly after all its long repression, was almost frenetic; it was the fire of the French in him flaring up from his Indian malignity. He cracked his fists under the nose of Nute. "You have abuse for the

last time. It is the end. Here come my *neveu*! He know! He has been educate! There is a way to pay. I have saved I have it. You shall take it. *Petit fils*, what do I do to pay?"

In the stress of that moment Sabatis put his own affairs away from himself. "Mr. Nute, I have tried to have my uncle take legal steps before this!"

"Let him try it! I'll have him in jail as smuggler, gambler—"

"We won't discuss this resort. I don't approve—"

"But you've taken his money!"

"And we won't discuss myself! Uncle, you say you have the money?"

"Here! Here!" He pulled from his breast a big wallet with the frenzied haste a man would show in snatching a serpent from his flesh. "It's what the appraise call for! It's fair. It's pay for what you steal! You didn't earn!"

The young man took the wallet and opened it; there were packets of paper money within. "This is all legal tender, Mr. Nute. I call on these men as witnesses! Here is your money!"

"I won't settle in any such way!"

"You have made my uncle's life very hard for him, sir. Most other men would not have endured what he has suffered. Here is your money." He walked up to Nute and tried to shove the wallet into the creditor's hand. But the man backed away, obstinate in his drunkenness.

"Some men would not have been as honest as my uncle. They would have repudiated such a debt."

"Repud—repu— Hell! Hear the cock-eyed warhoop spill language!"

Paul's black eyes glittered; Kezar had insolently hurled

back the proffered word; this sot was insulting in his rejection of honest money to pay a wicked debt. Nute had picked a poor time for persistence in his wretched persecution. Sabatis strode to him, pushed him against the bar and jammed the wallet into his hands. "You are paid," he declared, setting his fingers about Nute's hands and forcing the man to grasp the wallet.

"I have pay!" shouted Old Joel. "*Bon Dieu!* You all see I have pay! It's mine, all my own house, here! Now I make my will! It is all for my *petit fils*—for my good boy, Paul Sabatis."

However, the moment Paul released Nute's hands and stepped back the enraged man hurled the big wallet into the publican's face with such force that the old man staggered. "You and your book-learned pup can't put any such thing over on *me!*"

"You have been pay!" screamed Joel. "Now this is mine! *Oui!* I have the say!" He swore a hideous oath. He ran and flung open the door. Then he rushed to Nute and leaped with the agility of a young man, dealing the *coup-à-pied*, after the *habitant* fashion of combat. The blow felled Nute. Then Old Joel kneeled on his victim and drove his fists into the soggy face. Sabatis folded his arms and stood over them; his position and his expression suggested that he would resent interference.

"Pull off your old terrier there, Indian!" rasped Wallin.

Kezar was more insolent. "That's enough of it! I don't propose to see a Micmac beat up a white man!" But he did not step forward. The young Indian looked him in the eye.

"We are making payments here to-night! It shall not be said that we do not pay in full." He extended his arm slowly and pointed at Kezar. "I owe you some-

thing. I would pay it now—but it would only start another story to shame the innocent.”

He said no more. He felt that it would be shameful to bandy the name of Lola Hébert further in that room, even to make desperate effort to kill that lie about her.

Old Joel ceased his fist-flailing, dragged the stunned Nute to the door, and threw him out; returning, he picked up the wallet and threw that out. “Now I’m free man! Now I’m boss!” he raved. “This night it is no cost for my friends! Come! Drink! If you’re *his* friend, go out and be jolly with him,” he advised, pointing to the door.

Kezar took advantage of that suggestion, after he had nudged Wallin and others within reach. He started toward the door, heading a little group. He paid no attention to Sabatis. In the yard he held out his hand and helped Nute to his feet. “It was quite a wad he handed you! Doesn’t he get some change back?” he suggested, with malice.

“The damnation Quedaw kicked me in the head! I’ll kill him. Let me at him!”

In the door of his redeemed castle stood Old Joel. His nephew was at his side.

“Any white man who stays licked by an Indian will have to do a lot of explaining,” said Kezar.

By that remark he touched home in Nute’s case. The bullying tyrant’s soul had been fed on his border fame in the matter of Old Joel. He had been kicked out of the little empire he had created for himself. He handled the wallet, which had been restored to him by Wallin, as if it were something useless, superfluous, annoying. He started for the door.

“You come here I kill you,” said the half-breed, gravely,

quiet in his menace. His hysteria of anger had departed as suddenly as it had come.

"You can't afford to let an Indian bluff you," Kezar advised him.

"Haven't you made enough trouble for one night, that you now must set two old men upon each other?" demanded Sabatis, indignantly. "You are a coward as well as a liar." In his rage he was forgetting his resolve to deal mildly with Kezar in order that no conflict might endanger the girl's secret.

"Oh, you can't drag me into a scrap with you, Sabatis. I'm a white man!"

"So am I!" bawled Nute. "And I'll show you what an Indian needs." He ran to the hitch-rail and pulled loose his horse's halter-rope and climbed into his wagon. "I'm coming back *right!* I'm coming with the goods!"

"I warn you not to come," shouted Old Joel.

But Nute lashed his horse and drove away, clattering in the moonlight up the roadway beside Blood Brook.

"Twice you have used your tongue this night, like a murderer uses his knife," declared Sabatis, striding to Kezar.

"And I'll use a gun on you if you threaten me any more. Hold back, Sabatis! I carry one on my hip. Look here, men! This Indian is jealous because I have spoken casually to his girl once or twice. I don't want any fight with him."

"You are too much coward!" panted the Indian.

"If you pitch into me I'll shoot—and that's the right of a white man against a crazy buck! Back up, I tell you!" Kezar was bulwarked by his friends and they indorsed his attitude. To them, not understanding what was behind the situation, the actions and words of Sabatis

seemed like wanton provocation of a quarrel. Wallin drew his revolver. "In case of trouble you needn't worry about help, Don!"

"If that *sacré fou* what have gone up to his mountain to fetch trouble have any friend among you, go and stop him!" advised the half-breed, with venom. "It is the end for him or for me!"

Sabatis went back to the door. "Put them all out!" he advised. "Send them all away. We will shut up the place, lock the doors, and let him rave when he comes. I ask this, uncle, for your own sake!"

But, after all his years of serfdom, Old Joel was half insane in his sense of freedom. "Heh? Sneak and hide? Keep on being afraid of him after I have given the money! No, no!"

"But he has gone for his gun! There will be trouble."

"It will be trouble he make for himself! There is *my* gun!" He pointed to the weapon, hanging from a deer-horn rack behind the bar. "If I have not bought back my own place, and myself"—he pounded fist on his breast—"with my money, what good to live, heh? He would come just the same and rave and make his threat. No, I own myself and my place. I am free man. He shall find it out."

He went behind his bar and from a little drawer took paper, pen, and ink. They who remained in the big room surveyed him with interest. He scrubbed his forearm over the end of the bar until he had dried a little space. Then he began to write slowly, announcing to them each word as he penned it. "I make will to give all to my *neveu*, my Paul Sabatis. House, money, barns, everything. He takes all when I die. My name—Joel Paul Honoré L'Heureux. There! I have signed!"

Most of them had never known what his name was. He was an institution on the border as Old Joel.

"Who will sign as witness? I ask!" He held forth the pen and several volunteered. He folded the paper, sealed it in an envelope, and put it back in the drawer with the writing materials. He took down the gun calmly, without haste; it was a double-barreled shotgun.

"Uncle, I beg of you to go away for a little while. Leave me here. I will meet him. I know how to talk to him. He will listen to reason."

"It's my own place," replied the old man, his face hard and his eyes bright in his obstinacy. "They shall not carry the word up and down that I do not run my own place—ever after this!" It was new and proud promulgation that from then on, for all, he was master of his domain. Sabatis understood too well to waste time in further argument.

Without retort the young man started for the door; he determined to run up the Blood Brook road and halt the old bully at any risk.

"I command you! It is not your business!" cried Old Joel. He followed after. When the young man was out in the moonlight he started away at a lope.

Kezar's sense of mischief made his wits keen; he must safeguard Lola's putative lover! He grabbed Old Joel's arm. "So the boy wants all the honors, does he? Get on my horse! Get on!" He urged, eagerly. "I'll take a chance with the horse so as to make sure of good sport. He's coming in his wagon. You don't want to be on foot." He called for help and others joined him to lift the old man into his saddle. "Now for it, Joel! Beat out your nephew!" Kezar struck his horse a vicious blow and the animal galloped off up Blood Brook. "It's

too bad we can't see it, but it's worse to spoil a good sporting proposition!"

Sabatis jumped for the fleeing horse when it passed him, but missed. Old Joel went on. The young Indian raced after, making his best speed.

"Three to two—any size of bet—that Old Joel pots him," offered Kezar. "I have shot birds over my horse's head—he's steady as a rock!"

"I'm pretty rotten in my own way," stated Wallin; "but I'll be damned if I'll bet on murder. Kezar, you must be drunker than you look!"

Several of the men started off up the road. They who remained were silent and listened.

After a time they heard, from the mountain-side, the far distant rattle of iron against rocks. "He's coming down," gasped Wallin, nervously.

"Yes," Kezar answered, "standing up in that wagon, of course! He won't be able to hit this township if it was set up on edge for him."

"But you let that Indian have your horse!" shouted Wallin, his fears stirring his anger. "And you were just talking about white men against Indians! What's the matter with you?"

"It must have been a sudden and wild idea that the old man would fall off here in the yard and break his neck. No! I guess it was because I didn't want to see Sabatis beat him to a good thing! I don't care much for that young renegade."

Wallin turned his back. "What he said about your tongue, Kezar, hits me as pretty straight dope. Don't talk any more. You make me sick!"

The waiting was long; the tension was extreme. Now the wagon-wheels rattled noisily, now a stretch of duff

muffled them. Then a rifle cracked, sending sharp echoes among the hills. "Nute first!" whispered a listener. Before the echoes died away two fuller and louder reports crashed out. After that, silence.

In a few moments they heard the wagon-wheels again. The vehicle was plainly coming on at a great rate.

"Nute still in the game!" gasped a man.

"On his way down to start a new celebration," suggested Wallin.

Kezar had walked away from the group, as if he felt the hostility of the men. Nute's outfit soon appeared in sight, but the horse was running so wildly that they got only an indistinct view; the westering moon left shadows in the valley. The animal slowed its pace as it came near the hitch-rail and then stopped by force of habit, hanging its head and straddling its legs in exhaustion.

A dead man was doubled over the seat, his eyes staring at them out of a face hanging upside down. The man was dappled with blood and the tongue was sticking out as Nute had so often stuck out jeering tongue at Old Joel.

"God's sake! Throw a blanket over that!" pleaded Wallin. "Both charges of double-B must have got him."

None of them seemed to know just what to do. There was some talk of sending somewhere for a coroner. They canvassed the situation, wondering whether it would be best to run away and deny that they were present at Joel's at the time of the tragedy.

"The line runs across that mountain somewhere up in those woods," said Wallin. "On one side it's a life sentence, on the other side it's the noose. I'm sorry for Old Joel. He ought to have been let alone!"

A horse came pacing slowly out of the shadows of the Blood Brook road and, when the animal stopped to nibble at grasses in the clearing, Kezar whistled. The horse hastened to him, trotting; there was no rider.

Then Paul Sabatis came; the men who had gone up the road, urged by their desire to see the duel, straggled behind him. Sabatis carried the body of a man on his back, as hunters bear the burden of a dead deer. He hurried past the group in the yard and laid his sagging load on the long seat in the big room.

"Dead's a dornick!" reported one of the escort party. "The young one wouldn't let us give him a lift. Snarled at us like a bobcat! It was good shooting. They got each other!"

Kezar mounted his horse and went off at a gait which suggested that prudence was operating in his case, it was quite apparent from their demeanor that his associates would not longer bulwark him against the young Indian.

"Well, we may as well go in and condole," went on the man who had reported. He spat on the ground. "This infernal thing has given me a thirst. I'll buy the drinks!"

But Sabatis barred the door, spreading his arms. He was panting after his effort and his teeth showed like those of a ferocious dog.

"We're all friendly to you, youngster," said one, volunteering as spokesman.

Sabatis's stony silence was more effective than spoken threats. There was a long silence and the men in the yard shuffled their feet.

"You can't afford to be too notional, Paul. It was a sort of self-acting proposition. They had it in for each other. We've always been good customers."

"Take away this truth to put against the lie that

murderer told about me: he'll answer for what he has done this night. Tell him that! Go to him; he's the friend you protect!"

"He went too far—"

"You go far—all of you! Far from here. Never come back. This place is closed. It will never open. You are white dogs!" He glowered at them, taking face after face, seeking reply to the challenge. But nobody took up the gage of battle. He slammed the door and they heard the heavy bar driven into its slots.

It was some time before any one presumed to speak; they came only slowly to a realizing sense and seemed to find no phrase fit for the occasion. Then somebody sang the swan song for Old Joel's place: "I'm afraid those two won't get a very kind reception in hell; they've been the means of closing one of its best recruiting-stations."

"We can't leave *that* here," declared Wallin, nodding toward the blanket-shrouded figure in Nute's wagon.

"Why not lead the horse down to Old Moll's, leaving him just as he is?" was a suggestion after the conference had proceeded for a little while. "Considering the money he has spent there, she and her girls ought to be willing to lay him out."

"And there's the wallet!"

"Well, the best we can do for him now is to spend some of it in the way he'd like to spend it himself."

A man set hand upon the horse's bridle and Benson Nute's funeral procession moved slowly off down the river road.

Wallin was on horseback. "I'll hurry on ahead and stir 'em up, boys! We need open house, a few drinks, and plenty of piano music after this!"

CHAPTER XI

John Kavanagh lays plans for the payment of a debt he has owed to the loyal men of the Toban, and wades down into icy waters.

THE letter was palpably and unmistakably from source feminine, though the superscription was scrawlingly bold. When Abner Kezar held it against his thin nose he detected perfume, though the whiff was elusive.

That bit of scent invested the letter with a sort of sanctity; to invade its secrets seemed like rude invasion of a lady's boudoir. The old man had some such feeling in regard to the letter, but his thoughts were too vague to be put into words for an explanation to his scowling grandson. Young Kezar had profanely rebuked the grandfather's hesitation, and was in an ugly mood generally, that morning after his night's absence.

"But it's from a lady, Donnie, that's plain to be seen."

"Well, it's the only letter she has had from down-country! Girls always write to each other about fellows! I tell you to open it!"

"I'm ashamed—ashamed."

"We've got to keep our upper lips pretty near petrified in this thing. I'm playing the game—and playing it strong." He set his teeth. He had a memory flash of

just how he was playing it! "When it's nothing but unsealing a letter to see what the gossip is about—" He did not finish. He plucked the letter from his grandfather's hand. "How do you open an envelope so it won't show?"

"Steam! There's my little kettle in the back room."

"You can tend out on your business; I'll look after this." He came out to the big desk after a time, the letter in his hand; it was unfolded and he slapped the back of his hand against it.

Jealous rage convulsed his face. "Don't ever try to tell me again what to do or what not to do. This gives me a straight line on her! I knew I'd find something in a girl's letter."

The old man held out a timorous hand, but the grandson put the letter behind his back.

"There's no need of your reading it. There's a lot of slush-guff about wanting to keep up the acquaintance and hoping to come up here some day and visit, and see 'the duke,' whatever that means, in his own country. But you listen to this: 'I know you haven't wanted me to say anything to you about Kenneth Marthorn, but I simply must tell you that I have seen him. He has been back in the city.'"

"Kenneth Marthorn!" gasped the old man. "Is it Temiscouata Marthorn's son—the engineer?"

"That's the name here." He read on: "He's mum, absolutely. You know what Bob is to get into things, even when the nails in the cover have been clinched. Bob says Kenneth looked his father right in the eye and gave a perfect imitation of an oyster on an ice-cake. Nobody knows a thing. I take it there's been an awful row in the family. As to the girl in the case,

everybody is doing a lot of guessing, but nobody seems to know!"

"Then there's nothing for us to worry about if there's a girl in his case, Donnie!" interposed the old man, wistfully.

"What's the matter with your infernal old brains? Don't you see that the girl in the case must mean Clare herself? The two of 'em—she and that fellow—are putting something over on old Marthorn, I tell you! Probably on old John, too! What was all that row about that old Doc March reported on? It's a safe bet it wasn't merely timber business! There's something here that you and I ain't knowing to as yet. Don't you see how she is encouraging Clare by telling her that this Kenneth is keeping mum? It's a sly message to Clare. I have a mind to tear the blasted thing up!"

"But don't rumple it! Don't, Donnie! She mustn't guess we opened it."

"If you don't think a message is being sneaked to her, hear this: 'Kenneth has gone away to some wild place in the woods. What if it should be up where you live! Do write and tell me.' So that's the way of it! It's what Marthorn and Old X. K. were fighting about. Why haven't you pumped him?"

"I tried to—but he called me names. He isn't willing to say one word about what happened down-country."

"And here's the reason!" He slapped the letter. "In the woods, eh? Up here to camp out, dude fashion, and pussyfoot around to see her when old John isn't looking!"

"He's an engineer. I have heard of him. He was at Broad Falls."

"But he must be one of those city snobs just the same.

They're all alike. Here! Stick down the flap of this envelope so that it won't show. Then give me the letter. I'll take it up to the house with the mail. I may get a chance to watch her face when she reads it."

He did have opportunity for scrutiny. She helped her father with his mail before she opened her own letter. But her countenance revealed nothing under Kezar's jealous stare.

"Harriet Tell sends you her best wishes and hopes you are well, daddy," she said when she had finished. She made no other comment and the young man's angry suspicions were deepened. So Kenneth Marthorn was not a topic between father and daughter! He was sure that his presence would not have prevented her speaking out if she were not keeping a secret from Kavanagh.

"Ay! I remember the girl! She showed me some kindness when I needed it." His manner revealed that the memory was not a pleasant one. Abruptly he turned to Kezar.

"What's this news about the Portage, boy? Wicked doings there last night, they tell me."

The young man was able to control his expression, for he had expected that Kavanagh would ask for information on a subject which was engaging all tongues in the section.

"Never mind the bloody details," broke in Kavanagh, after Kezar had made a start in his narrative. "It's enough to know that they Kilkennycatted each other. Good riddance! And ye were there, eh?" The gray eyebrows were thrust forward; the demand was voiced sharply.

"Only by accident. I was down that way doing business with Tom Wallin about some hackmatack."

"These *days* are fine long days for doing business, my boy! Ye'd better use the nights as God planned for 'em."

"I usually do, sir. But last night I was obliged to wait for Wallin." He was glad of the opportunity to get in his lie before any other reports came up the river. He wished he saw as good a chance to bolster his lie about Lola Hébert. He began rather awkwardly to retail general border gossip, hoping that he might be able to slip in a few words on the subject without appearing to force the topic or to show too much interest. But Kavanagh was more impatient and peremptory than usual that day. He checked the gossip as curtly as he stopped the narrative of the Portage affair. His eyes were very bright in their hollowed sockets. His gaunt hands were white against the moosehide. Somehow he gave the impression of a man impatient in his expectancy of an event or an arrival.

"Why did not Abner come with the mail?"

"I offered—"

"I want to see him. You tell him I want to see him."

Clare hastened to speak to the young man when he rose. "I have something to ask, too, Don. I'm going to a wedding-dinner to-day. Will you be my beau?" She couched the request in the familiar manner of a proven friend, and he replied to her smile gratefully. "It's Timothy Mulkern and Rosie O'Shea. They were married at the church by Father Laflamme early this morning."

"It's the spoiling of a good dynamite boss to make a poor husband," growled Kavanagh. "She a slip of a girl and he more fit to be her father!"

"But getting a good wife ought to make him a better man, daddy."

"She'll make him afeard of the stuff—and he'll quit. He'll take no more risks! And he's my best man. He never minded chances."

"I appeal to you for help, Don! A man needs a good wife, doesn't he?"

"Yes, more than anything else in the world," he declared with ardor. "To keep him right and straight!"

"And keep him home nights, away from such places as the Portage," snapped Kavanagh, dwelling on the subject, to Kezar's discomfiture.

"But I haven't been there—"

"Save your speech. You needn't lie to me. I'm not your wife. And yet I don't say that ye lie! But mind my word to ye, boy! I may be too busy to talk further to ye. Ye're a fine, upstanding lad and there's no telling what may come of it!" He embraced the two of them with gaze that had significance in it. "The women who are carried away by looks are too big fools to be any good as wives. The woman who is wise looks for character and knows it when she sees it. Mind my word to ye, boy! The makings are in ye! Now on with ye!"

"I'll be ready at noon, Don," the girl called after him.

"What do ye make of him, colleen?" he demanded, bluntly. "I have a good eye for men when they stand before me in their boots. I have needed grit and muscle in men—I have never minded much else about 'em. But in picking men a woman has something better than an eye. What do you make of him?"

He was employing the method which he had used with success in his affairs with men; he had tried "to jump" her into revealing hidden sentiments, providing there-

were any. But his query did not even deepen the color on her cheeks. "Why, daddy," she replied, with a laugh, "I never thought that Don was sufficiently complex to require any study. I don't believe I could add anything to your opinion of him."

"Oh, so that's it!" There was distinctly a touch of disappointment in his tone. "Oh, so *that's* it!" he repeated, and this time there was just as distinct relief. "Well, perhaps it's better as it is. With the tongue the Kavanaghs are quick on the trigger, but with the head"—he tapped knuckles against his forehead—"they don't shoot till they know whether the game is worth while—whether it's quillpig or bear."

"I know what you're thinking about," she told him. She went and leaned against the barrel-chair and put her arm about his neck. "But I can't help you any, for I have never thought about it."

"The way of you when I asked—that told me about Donald!"

"Oh, I like him! I may like him much more—when I have thought more about it." Her candor was convincing.

"And *now* the way of you! It tells me that none of the fine folks are in your mind."

"No one, daddy!"

"I leave you free to choose, alannah!"

She bent and kissed him. "For that reason I'll need to be more careful. Responsibility does make one more careful," she went on, turning the matter into jest. "And wise! See how solemn, I have become since you have turned over to me all the figuring on the stumpage contracts!"

"What I said against marriage—against Mulkern, it

doesn't stand. It's only because a dynamite boss shouldn't have a wife in his mind when he has the bang-juice in his hand. But pass this along to Rosie with my good word" He took from his wallet a packet of new bank-notes, bound with the teller's tape. "She mustn't make him afeard. With old Marthorn's devils getting more underfoot every year, I need Mulkern. He will go farther into the heart of a jam and will beat his stuff nearer the busting-point than any other hell-roarer in the Toban."

His voice had a plaintive tone. He changed the subject. "Colleen, ye're doing much to help me these days. So willing are ye, and that's the joy of it! And if some things I ask you to do seem strange and not quite to your taste as a fine lady, will ye do 'em for me just the same?"

"I will! I know you have good reason for asking."

"Ay! Good reason. The fine folks might think the things strange. But there are no fine folks here—they're your own good friends in the Toban. You'll be pleasing them. Remember! Most of all you'll be pleasing me."

She queried with her eyes, but he shook his head. "All in good time, darlin'. I have your promise. Now run off by yourself for a time. Get ye on your ribbons for the wedding-dance. Here comes old Dot-and-Carry-One."

Abner Kezar brought posies in his hand, as usual. He gave them to the girl when she met him in the door. "I picked them when the dew was on. I'm sorry I did not send them by Donald. But my mind was—was—"

"Come along here, you stuttering old laggard! I'll have something for your mind."

When Clare had gone Kavanagh called for Dumphy.

"Close the outside door, man, and stand against it. Let no one in! I'm busy." He flung gesture toward his desk. "Get pen, Abner, pen and paper. Pull your table close."

After the man of business had seated himself and squared his elbows Kavanagh leaned toward him and spoke low. "Write it with care, Abner, and help me with advice when I ask for it. I'm going to make another will."

Kezar laid down his pen and sat back in his chair. "And the one you made—"

"This has nothing to do with the one I have made. That is signed and sealed and stands as it is. This is my will about my funeral." He snapped his fingers under the factor's nose. "Don't saucer-eye at me in that style! When a man dies there's a funeral. You don't think I'm going to live forever, do you?"

"But the arrangements can be—"

Kavanagh was in no mood for interruptions that day. "It's my own funeral; I'm paying the bills and the arrangements are mine. And understand this at the start, Kezar: I'm in a hurry and there's much to be written. Don't hand me advice till I ask for it. And the advice I'll need is about different kinds of ways to give folks a good time. That's the kind of a funeral I propose to have."

The continued amazed stare from Kezar annoyed the master.

"Don't think I'm a lunatic! Understand right now that there's method in what I'm doing. I'll waste a word or two on you at the start so that you may be ready later when folks say I was crazy. Abner, I'm leaving my girl to follow after me in my business. Once

you would have told me that *that* idea was crazy. What talk have you now?"

"She is fully capable."

"Ay, she is! She has shown all of us a few points. It's in her! When I am gone the devils who have been yapping at the heels of my business will try to set their teeth into it. Old Marthorn's gang is waiting. She will need many friends. By the gods! I'll leave 'em behind me for her. It sha'n't be said that Kavanagh didn't do as well by his friends as he knew how. I owe the boys a treat, Kezar. I promised 'em a band at the home-coming. But sorrow was in me, Abner, sorrow was in me that night. I owe 'em much for their disappointment. I'll pay! To make friends for the colleen and keep green my memory! I promised 'em a band at the home-coming. There shall be two bands at the funeral. Note it! There'll be other things as well. Dip your pen! And there'll be telegrams for you to write this day, Abner. It's near. It's near!" He put his hand upon his breast. "I have lived close to the wilderness, like an old bull moose, Abner. And instinct tells the old moose when the time is at hand. I have seen 'em stagger to their hiding-places. I'm at the end. Write!" He spoke hastily, eagerly.

Donald Kezar came for Clare a little before noon and the two went to the door where Dumphy was on guard. "He said it was private business, Miss Clare, but sure it can't be orders for *you*," apologized the sentinel, and he opened the door for them. Kavanagh halted in his monotone of dictation. "Whist, man! turn your papers upside down!"

"We're off for the wedding-party, daddy. And, if you don't mind, we'll stay for a dance or two."

"It would not seem friendly if you did not, darlin'!

I'm glad to have you friendly with all. We need our friends. Kiss the bride for me and take a step with the smart, upstanding boys."

"I'll carry to all your best wishes."

She had come only a few steps into the big room, out of deference to the business which engaged him. She turned to leave with Donald.

"Alannah!" called her father. He spoke softly, tenderly. "Come! Just for a moment." He pulled her on his knee. "And now that ye're here I can't remember just what it was I wanted to say to ye." Constraint, a queer awkwardness, suddenly seized upon him. "But I think it was for this, darlin'!" He put his palms to her cheeks and drew her to him and kissed her forehead. He was silent for a few moments, holding her close to him. "And now off with ye, and be gay!" he said, huskily.

But her lips quivered when she rose, and she turned her face away so that he might not see the tears in her eyes. Between them the subject of his health was taboo. But with love's apprehension she had watched, day by day, the sallow whiteness taking the place of the healthy tan; the gaunt hands had trembled more than ever before when they touched her cheeks. She controlled herself and turned at the door and flashed a smile at him.

When she stepped forth into the radiance of the noon-day sun he stared after her with such pathetic intensity that Abner Kezar dropped his pen and laced together his nervous fingers.

"Dumphy, leave the door be for a bit!" He kept his eyes on her till the brow of the hill barred his vision. Then he raised his hand and the guardian of the door understood and closed the portal without noise, with a

sort of instinctive reverence as one might drop the lid of a casket over a dead face.

"God bless ye and keep ye, my colleen! Good-by!" He put his shaking hands to his face and wept weakly

"John, you shouldn't let her go away from you—not the way you're feeling," urged Kezar.

"It's no sight for a girl! I have seen many a man die. And I have always remembered how they died instead of how they lived."

"But John—John! You don't think you're going to die—not soon!"

"Who knows best what means this chill from my toes to my knees, you or me, you old arithmetic? It's coming on—it's coming up—like I've felt the icy water when I've waded on the drive in the spring. It's easy to die when you're done. It's only to stop breathing. But I'm not done. Your pen, man! Where was we? It's the third day of it we were planning."

"John! John! I can't go on!"

"Dip your pen! I'm wading deeper. There's no time to waste."

The man of business held his wrist with his hand, to steady himself, and dipped.

"The third day—the third day! Have I made it plain how ye shall set the wangan bateau on the big wheels for my hearse?"

"Yes," choked the scribe.

"It shall be made such a day that they will never forget John Kavanagh's waken! It's owing to 'em! I have always paid my debts. And ye shall tell 'em, Abner, that though my legs were cold my heart was still warm when I planned. Write!"

CHAPTER XII

A wedding puts spurs to Donald Kezar's passion and he tells Clare more with his eyes than he dares to utter with his mouth; the Kavanagh journeys with his spiked boots.

THERE were a good many others in the Toban besides John Kavanagh who failed to approve the match between Timothy Mulkern and little Rosie O'Shea. But though Tim's wisdom was questioned, his love for the girl never was.

Rosie was a bit of a public character in a proper sort of way.

She came up from the city to be a waitress at the tavern at Ste. Agathe. Before her advent there had never been a waitress at the tavern. Slouchy, awkward youths had served food to the patrons, who were mostly woodsmen boarders and timber-job transients. But when Felix Dubé took the tavern he set aside a special table for sportsmen and commercial bagmen and secured Rosie O'Shea, right from the city, a real waitress, by paying her special wages as an attraction. She was worth the price. She had bright eyes, a snub nose, a freckle or two to set off the peachblow of her cheeks; she stepped quickly in her high-heeled shoes and flicked her short skirts tantalizingly. When she strolled up and down the streets, in her hours off duty, under her pink sunshade, men stood still and gazed after her, and the girls of the village kept to the

other side of the street in order that Rosie's city-made dresses might not put the home-made finery to shame. And Rosie had a reputation quite her own. One evening, in front of the big store, she slapped the face of a sportsman whom liquor had made loving.

And the second time they met she slapped the face of Tim Mulkern.

But she smiled when she slapped him. "It was a big mosquito!" she explained. "Mercy! There he was biting and biting and you didn't seem to notice him."

But it is doubtful whether Tim Mulkern just then would have taken his attention from Rosie O'Shea to devote any of it to a bulldog chewing on his leg.

The girl was looking on something she had never seen before—her soul realized it because her feminine wit was keen. She had had plenty of experience, and this new experience had had no parallel in her life. She saw utter, blind, worshipful, wistful, adoring self-surrender—absolute exposition of the "I'll-let-you-walk-on-me" kind of love, a love so supremely self-abnegatory that it was voiceless.

That was the beginning of the courtship; the end of it was a prompt promulgation of the banns, to the amazement of Ste. Agathe.

And when poor, wondering Tim asked her for an explanation, in hope that he might be able to wake up to some realization that this happiness was not a dream, she said: "It's because you weren't fresh, Tim. Everybody else has been fresh right off. I don't care if your hair is gray. It's the way you look at me that gets *me*! It got me right at the start! It don't do no good to have a feller tell a girl she's a lady and good enough for him unless his look goes with what he says."

"The wedding-bells are ringing gay," stated somebody, jocosely. "Seems to be fine weather for it. Probably a wedding will follow a funeral even at Old Joel's place; they say that Paul Sabatis is going to marry the Hébert girl."

So the ready tongues of the Toban were tossing his lie!

Kezar walked away toward the tables, for many eyes were on him and he was not sure just what his countenance might tell them.

Romeo Shank led a party to the jug; they filled pannikins and clinked them.

"Do you drink with us, Tim?" queried a man.

"There's that jug, and another one is ready when it's gone, boys. I have punished my share in my day. But I have taken my last drink."

"Here, Fiddler Tom! Catch this tune. Tum-de, dum, dum!" cried Shank, ever ready, catch-as-catch-can minstrel. "Dum-ty, dum! That's it," he sang:

"Oh-h-h-h, Tim Mulkern is high and dry,
While the rest of the gang goes sliding by.
Married now and a-doin' well,
And the rest of us all are bound for— Oh-h-h!
Fol de larry, eight hands round!"

"Yes, and I have fired my last charge of rend-rock," confided Mulkern to Kezar. "I don't dare to tell John Kavanagh so, but somebody else may as well tell him. From this time on I've got too much to live for."

"The X. K. drive will miss you, Tim," said Donald, gravely. Somehow, in his new hopes, this defection seemed to have to do with his own affairs. He knew the value of Kavanagh's right-hand man.

"Not even for the colleen herself, Don! And whist!"

He looked sharply about to make sure that no one could hear; the men were practising the new song. "It's coming to that pretty soon, isn't it? How does he seem? I have been keeping away from Old X. K., for I would forget myself if he lashed my Rosie with his tongue. Do you think he is nigh the end?"

"I'm afraid so, Tim. I have noticed it more than the others who see him every day."

Mulkern scratched his ear, looked up at the sky and down at the ground, and stole side-glances at Kezar.

"It's a big business he's leaving, Donald. It'll have to be running itself, except for your grandfather—and you can't expect much more from him in the way of days on earth."

"That's true!"

"It's too bad to see the X. K. go to pieces."

"I think that Clare intends to keep on with it. She has been posting herself."

"She is a smart girl. She is a good girl! But she needs the right man to boss her crews." He faced Donald squarely with shrewd stare. "Sainte Agathe's bread and butter depends on that business, boy. I may be a traitor, leaving it as I'm doing! But I've got a wife, and not many years are left to me, annyway. I'm not going to run the risk of chopping off all my years. I'm getting old and clumsy and the damn' dynamite is being speeded up every year by the men who make it. I'll do my part in the mill and on the sorting-boom. She needs somebody up-country who can imitate John Kavanagh; though, of course, there can be nobody who can match him. Look here, Donald," he demanded, bluntly, "have you stopped your underhand hellishness, here and there and yonder?"

"I never did very much—the lies—"

"What has been done we'll leave it be. I'll not relish any try you make to bluff me about it. I'm asking whether ye're done from now on?"

"I'm done with all foolishness."

"Then here's good luck to ye, and the hope that you'll soon be as happy a married man as I am this day. There's a help we all can give ye—it's to keep the good word going about you in these parts. It'll come to her ears, never fear." He clapped hand against Donald's shoulder and went away to inspect the tables.

Kezar walked up and down the yard, his hands behind his back, pondering. It was in his mind to rush affairs with Clare, copying the precipitateness of Mulkern's courtship. He felt that haste was necessary in his case and he was ready to take desperate chances.

At that moment Mr. Shank's choristers were touching upon the subject of desperate chances, in song:

"For-r-r, we left him at the landin' with his dunnage on his breast.

Of all the good white-water men, Tim Trott were sure the best!
But he tried to ride a bubble when Tulandic jam he broke.
In God we trust, but bubbles bust, and he never seed the joke!"

In a few moments Cyrus gave the wood cook's call:
"Ay oi-i-i! Grub on the ta-a-able!"

The guests made a little procession and marched twice around the yard, the fiddler leading and playing "Hull's Victory."

Clare walked happily at Donald's side and snuggled close to him when they were seated at table. "A wedding! It makes everybody so happy, and it ought to!"

"That's right!"

"Then why are you so solemn, Don?"

"I don't dare to tell you," he stammered.

"Don't dare?"

"It's because I am thinking of you." He was as awkward as a school-boy essaying the making of love for the first time.

Her frank laughter put him out of countenance still more. All about them was shrill hilarity of women; the men bawled jests.

"I don't mean that you're a solemn subject," he apologized, leaning close to her. "But when I think of you I feel so worthless! I wish I hadn't stayed in the woods like I've done. It spoils a man. He doesn't know anything. He's green. You've seen 'em outside. You know the difference."

"The principal features I noticed were selfishness and snobbery. I really didn't investigate very much to find other qualities. Perhaps I wasn't enough interested."

Being so well versed in guile himself, he wondered just what she was hiding under that indifference.

"But, of course, in looks and—and styles—in education," he floundered on, "they stack up better than anybody you've seen up here in the woods."

"Are you fishing for compliments, sir?"

"I reckon you'd have to stretch the truth a little to pay any compliment to me," he returned, bitterly.

"No, Donald. But I'm not going to pay you any compliments. They're my particular aversion."

"Yes, I know it. I've heard you talk. But I wish—"

He looked away from her and was unable to finish the sentence. There were so many things he wished he could do! He dared not mention one of them.

Clare had often found that comedy would deftly turn the flank of a critical situation. His ardor was apparent

and she did not frown or turn unkindly eyes on him; rather, her mien was a bit tender and encouraging. But when he stumbled over the "wish" and halted in confusion she picked up the wishbone which she had removed from the breast of her fried chicken.

"Put it in your pocket, Don. Hang it behind the stove till it dries. Then we'll break it between us and perhaps you may get that wish!" Her merriment scattered the half-formed projects as a wind scatters leaves.

She turned away and took up conversation with the others.

For the dancing Mulkern had laid planed boards for a platform under the trees, and an accordion and a flute supplemented Tom's fiddle.

In the late afternoon the sound of the music was in the ears of John Kavanagh, panting for breath in his barrel-chair.

Abner Kezar, his papers folded and put away, sat with his master. His face was as white as Kavanagh's. "Oh, John, John! You should have had one of the great doctors long before this."

Kavanagh wagged slow negation with his head.

"I ask again. Won't you let me send a telegram to bring one?"

"Old X. K.'s" scowl answered him on that point.

"But it's a cruel thing not to let your daughter know."

"Man, man! I know what I do! Where I'm going I *don't* know. But I'm taking with me the happy smile she gave me when she passed out of that door. The smile of her! Not the sorrow and the tears of her were she here now whilst my eyes are closing! I don't know what the other place is like. But if I'm to be John Kavanagh

there my memory will go with me; her smile is a blessed memory."

He stood up, showing sudden strength and resolution. He stripped from him the dressing-gown in which he had been wrapped.

"If I'm to be John Kavanagh there, I'll go right! Dumphy!"

The servitor opened the door and stepped in.

"Dumphy! Bring the boots with the spikes and my belted jacket."

"Don't stand up, John!" pleaded Kezar. "It's aggravating your trouble. It's bad for you. Stop, Dumphy! He doesn't want his boots and jacket!"

"Who is it that's giving off orders over mine? Dumphy! Do as I bid ye!" His demeanor was that of the Kavanagh, long master of men, though a touch of delirium was apparent in his manner and speech.

He pulled on the jacket when Dumphy held it for his arms; he put out first one foot and then the other, and the man dragged on the boots and laced them.

"Bring the chair into the open before the door. I've lived under God's high sky and I'll die outdoors under it!

"It's pretty music," he said, after he had sat and listened for a time. "Somewhere! But I can't see that far—not now, Abner." He stroked his palm across his filming eyes. "What is it about?"

"It is the dance—at Tim Mulkern's."

"Oh ay! I mind me now. I told her to stay and dance. It will make the friends for her. And are the logs running? Do you see?"

"Yes, John!" whimpered the old man.

"The rear will soon be in the boom. The boys can well afford to knock off for the funeral. It's a fine comfort for

"No, merely commented on a matter of public record—a marriage by special license."

"But that license doesn't give the right address of the lady—that is, it merely gives a New York hotel and we can't trace her beyond that." In his zeal Mr. Donaldson was exposing a great deal.

"That so? I didn't even know just what hotel she lived at. I saw her only at the country club and—and—a few other places."

"But you told Colonel Marthorn that she was not an actress."

"Yes, he seemed to need cheering up a bit. Not but what actresses are all right, of course, but a little difference in the—"

"But what is she?"

"I don't have the least idea. Only active occupation, so I should say, was being a widow."

"How do you know that she was a widow?"

Mr. Bob turned a discomposing stare on Donaldson. "Look here, dear man! Why is Colonel Marthorn wasting his time and yours on my mere guess-so? Kenneth has been home two days. He has more information to give out about his own wife than I have. Being old-fashioned in my notions of propriety, I promptly lost interest in the young lady the moment Kenneth married her."

Thereupon Mr. Donaldson growled a naughty word and went away.

Kenneth Marthorn, returning to his father, had exhibited a chastened spirit and filial respect.

However, the elder Marthorn, on his part, showed no respect for his son's mood or his reticence. He broke in furiously on the young man's first words. "You'll tell me what you think is best, eh? You'll tell me *all*."

"Up to a certain point, sir, I can tell you. After that it seems to be my affair."

"Who and what is that woman? Where is she?"

"That's the part I can't tell you."

"Can't tell me anything about the woman you have married, to the disgrace of our family?"

"I was married, but I have no wife. I assure you, on my honor, that I have no wife. I am the same as I was. That ought to be satisfactory to you."

"Do you think for one moment that I'm to be left satisfied with that ridiculous riddle? Make a clean breast of it, sir!"

"And that means, of course, telling the family and the friends of the family?"

"Telling the world, sir! If you have escaped from an adventuress I propose to have everybody know it. Your position in society depends on an understanding that will stop gossip."

Young Marthorn's thoughts flashed back to Omaha and to the *status quo ante* which he had established between a doting old man and a foolish girl wife; it was not in his mind to undo what his diplomacy, his pledges of secrecy, his manly pleadings, his honest efforts, and his crucified feelings had accomplished.

"Father, this is no whim on my part. It's bitter necessity. I did a foolish thing. I'm not going to follow it up by betrayal of a secret which isn't mine."

"Is that what you call telling the truth to your own father? Am I a man you can't trust?"

"Not with this thing! It's fragile. You're constitutionally incapable of handling it right." There was a shade of his usual banter in his tone, as if he were trying to relieve the situation.

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animus in a way to shame you if you try any dirty work!" He banged his fist on the table. "You've taken away my allowance. I need the job. By gad! I'm going to hang onto it!"

"Get out of here!" shouted Colonel Marthorn, in the upheaval of his emotions not able to tell himself whether he wanted to kick this bold young recalcitrant or slap him on the back with hearty and admiring indorsement of his grit. But he was sure that he couldn't restrain himself, either way, much longer.

"Certainly! By the way, Mr. President, I'm anxious to be on my job and would like to leave for the Toban to-morrow. But as to that hearing before the board—"

"There'll be no hearing! If you'll get into the woods and stay there your family may be able to have a little peace."

"Thank you, Mr. President! Now, dad—"

"You get out!"

"Sure," agreed young Mr. Marthorn, showing no perturbation, seeming to guess why the colonel turned his back. "See you to-morrow before I go. We need to have a bit of a powwow about the plans."

"It's about time to have plans in the Toban," growled the colonel. "If you can raise head of water enough to drown a man named Kavanagh I'll start your allowance again."

Kenneth's mother kissed him and cried over him, but it was not in her meek and maternal nature to press him overmuch. He made up a bit of a story for her and secured her pledge of secrecy. His desire to ease her anxiety seemed excuse for the little lie; he promised her full explanation later, and the mystery was something which she could coddle and rather enjoy.

"You must excuse your father if he was so angry," she urged. "He has had such a dreadful experience right on top of all his fears about you." Then Kenneth was supplied with the details of the affair with Kavanagh! There was no palliation in her view of it—there were no two sides. It was unprovoked, wanton, atrocious assault by an ogre from the woods.

"I have heard of Kavanagh," said Kenneth, truly shocked by the information as the mother phrased it. "He is a coarse, rough man, very brutal in his ways, according to all stories. And there has been a lot of trouble over the water-rights between him and our company. That's why I'm going into the woods—to straighten all that out. We have bought old charters and we'll build big dams and all such, according to the law," he told her, glad of a chance to keep the subject from himself. "And we'll pay that old Kavanagh blusterer back for what he did to dad, never you fear, little mother," he chatted on.

But after the chief engineer of the Great Temiscouata had led his men into the summer woods of the Toban, seeking sources and courses and levels of the waterways, he found enough for his attention without going out of his way to settle any of the paternal scores.

Probably, if Cora Marthorn had been at home, Kenneth would have received some side-lights on the character of Clare Kavanagh and her association with the distressing scene on the campus of Manor Verona. But Miss Marthorn had hurried away on her Alaskan expedition, glad to escape eyes and tongues and the obsession of the elopement disgrace. And Kenneth Marthorn had never heard of Clare Kavanagh.

But all of the Toban voiced her name when the news of the death of John Kavanagh went abroad.

In the Toban the word is truly winged!

The invitation which went with the news was by word of mouth, but its authority was not questioned; it embraced all persons; it promised much. The wake of John Kavanagh was on at Ste. Agathe! Three days of hospitality! On the fourth day the funeral! But men talked about it as if it were a festival instead of a funeral.

After hearing two days of the talk, after seeing all the bateaux and canoes hastening down the river in steady procession, after the Temiscouata bosses had been forced to declare holiday for the men who threatened to desert their jobs without permission, Kenneth Marthorn gave in to his own inclinations. The call of such an event in the monotony of woods life was not to be resisted. He and his men took canoes and joined the procession. It was on the third day of the wake that they journeyed down; they pulled ashore at Ste. Agathe when the twilight was deepening.

Just as men had talked, it was more of festival than funeral.

The big house on the hill was dark and solemn; they who were feasting on the dead man's bounty did not disturb the new sanctity which invested the mansion. They kept away and made merry in the village at the foot of the hill.

On the river slope, showing in the gloom like a huge, fiery gem, was a pit brimming with wood coals which sent up flickers of flame. Constantly above these coals, spitted on bars of steel, were carcasses of oxen, their roasting timed so that one was always ready for the knives. Every now and then men held chickens over the glowing coals on long rods. With hooked rods they lifted great iron pots out of the coals and uncovered

baked beans, golden brown and giving forth aroma. The mingled fragrance of cooking and the smell of the wood smoke gave tang to appetite. Near the barbecue pit were long tables under canvas and the tables were piled with food all the time; there were no meal-hours at the Kavanagh's wake. Men were constantly urged to eat. Some sat at the tables on benches; others stood; others strolled about. Most of them had food in their hands. On the tables were smoking meats, haunches of beef, savory roast sirloin surrendering rosy slices under the knives of the carvers. There were pigs roasted, and chickens and eggs and potatoes fresh from the coals. Heaped loaves of hot brown bread, deep meat pasties, cakes and doughnuts and pies. Little mountains of gingerbread, and cookies dusted with sugar and caraway seeds; all the varieties of food that a woodsman's hearty appetite craved. Liquor in kegs and jugs and barrels, and plenty of little dippers. Hundreds of men, laughing, wrestling, drinking, dancing, eating, and sleeping; they lay under all the trees and on the grassy slopes with their woodsman scorn of pillows and mattresses or a roof.

Marthorn and his men were wolfishly hungry; they were welcomed by the helpers at the tables.

A man, half drunk, came and glowered on the strangers. "I know ye! Ye're Temiscouata scum. It was your popple that killed John Kavanagh. It's a wonder he doesn't rise from where he's lying up there on the hill and—"

A servitor who was cutting meat laid down his knife and doubled his fists under the drunken man's nose. "You'd be the one to get the flat of his hand were he here! His will spoke for a welcome to everybody. You're shaming the words in his will. Even old Temiscouata

Marthorn himself would get the best should he come. Along out with ye!" He grabbed the man's collar and flung him out of the tent.

"If there's any question—any—" began Kenneth, apologetically.

"Man, there are no questions here till the funeral is over. I don't care who ye are. It's enough to know that ye're hungry," declared another of the helpers. "Eat, and God bless ye! It's by the will of Old X. K., rest his soul!"

So they ate of the food of Kavanagh's bounty and strolled about the village, seeing what there was to be seen and hearing what there was to hear. Therefore, keeping his ears open, young Mr. Marthorn heard much about the beauty, talents, and fortune of the heiress of the X. K. Also he heard something which astonished him. He heard it often and was obliged to believe, for it was indorsed by that talismanic statement which was then controlling all the plans and doings in Ste. Agathe—"It's by the will of the Kavanagh!" The funeral procession was to be really a parade, and Clare Kavanagh was to lead it on horseback!

One of the men voiced Kenneth's own shocked sentiments, and his tones were incautiously loud. "No girl in her right senses would do anything like that, even if her father's will did tell her to."

"What's that?" demanded a wizened man who wore a silk hat.

"I wasn't talking to you, sir."

"Well, you won't be lowering yourself by talking to Doctor Archaleus March. And I heard what you said about the Queen of the Toban, even if you are now denying it."

"I am not denying anything," expostulated the incautious person. Men were gathering around. But Doctor March of the whirling wits had resolved to make the most of a favorite situation—an opportunity to din speech into the ears of the public.

"I can see what you are. You're a dude from down-river. Your flannel shirt doesn't fool *me*. I've been down among your stuck-up noses. I went as the special doctor of John X. Kavanagh, and now I don't propose to stand idly by and hear his daughter slandered."

"But I didn't—"

"Shut up or you'll make it worse. Those wobble-necked women-geese down where you come from can't love, honor, and obey anybody that's alive, much less somebody that's dead. They think they're mourning when they hang a lot of crape on the outside and are singing 'Hail, Columby' inside whilst the minister is praying at the funeral. Clare Kavanagh mourns so much for her father that she'd cut off her lily-white hand rather than fall down on what he asked her to do!"

"Sure she would! Who says she wouldn't?" demanded one of the bystanders.

"She has got grit enough to be his son, and she loved him as only girls know how to love. That's Clare Kavanagh!" The doctor's voice was shrill with passion.

The doctor leaned forward and tapped a finger on the shoulder of the disconcerted Temiscouata man. "If she rides ahead with sorrow in her heart so as to be first at the bed where her father will sleep his last sleep—rides because he put it in his will for her so to do—ain't she just as sweet and good and true as any of your waddling citified ducks who have to be hauled in a hack? If she ain't, then say so!"

"Say so!" counseled several men in truculent chorus.

"If I was as full of ginger as I was once," declared the doctor, "I'd put a rosette around your eye."

"You needn't worry about not having your decoratin' done for you," stated one of the group. "What did this son of a hunk o' beeswax say about Queen Clare?"

"Just a moment!" pleaded Marthorn. He pointed to the doctor. "This gentleman misunderstood an innocent remark." Their situation was dangerous and he lied brazenly. "Nothing whatever was said about Miss Kavanagh. None of us ever saw the lady, none of us knows her, and I'm quite sure that we never heard of her till very lately."

"What's all this about 'we,' and how do *you* fit in?" asked the volunteer for the decorative job.

"I'm speaking for our party—these men here."

"Well, you must have lived a long ways off all your life never to have heard of Clare Kavanagh! And it's more or less of an insult to say that you never heard of her."

"He ought to be licked for saying it," stated the doctor.

"Leave the both of 'em to me," urged the volunteer.

But Kenneth put firm hand against the fellow's breast and pushed him back, stepping between the champion and the Temiscouata man. "Look here, men, all!" he cried, sharply, in the convincing manner of authority. "We are strangers here, but we are showing more respect for Miss Kavanagh and her father's memory than you are. We are behaving. You are trying to start a riot at a funeral, and that will disgrace everybody."

"That talk is right," concurred Timothy Mulkern, who had come hurrying; he had constituted himself a sort of chief of staff in the funeral management and kept a sharp

eye on the gatherings of men. "What does his will say? It's welcome to all! Old Steve Marthorn could walk through here this night and I'd flatten the man who cocked at him so much as the quirk of an eye. Scatter ye! I've got a dozen locked in the warp-shanty a'ready, so that the funeral sha'n't be shamed. Ye'll join 'em if I hear more. And do you go home and keep your clapper quiet," he told the doctor. "When I see that plug-hat in the middle of a crowd I know that it means trouble as sure as a sundog warns of a storm."

Marthorn walked on with his men, for the second time that night he had heard the name of Marthorn set as the limit of toleration by the henchmen of John Kavanagh.

"There seems to be considerable hair-trigger element in this proposition," he told his friends. "You'd better call me Bill Jones until we get out of this village. The Kavanaghs don't seem to care especially for the Marthorns. I don't want that girl to think that I came down here to break up her father's funeral."

Men were following them, grumbling, and in order to avoid further trouble he and his party decided to get off the streets. In the crowded tavern they were obliged to put up with shake-down beds on the floor of "the ram pasture," as the garret was called.

But nobody in Ste. Agathe slept much that night; the Kavanagh wake was all that the name implied.

CHAPTER XIV

Whim carries Kenneth Marthorn into the presence of Clare Kavanagh and necessity carries him away from her.

ALTHOUGH the nights and days of Kavanagh's wake had been turned into a festival, the day of the funeral was made decorous by the sincere mourning of the men whom he had led and the women whose homes had been supported by the wages he had paid.

They who feasted and danced obeyed the provisions of his will; they had taken him at his word; all the arrangements had invited them to comply with his request; by refusing to eat and drink and make holiday they would have shown ingratitude. It was not the nature of the folks of the Toban to throw John Kavanagh's bounty in his dead face.

Reflecting on the matter, Kenneth Marthorn understood better; the affair lost considerable of its grotesqueness. It was simple loyalty, following the dictates of the man whom they had so long obeyed.

After the hearsay of the night before, looking ahead, the plans for the obsequies had seemed fantastic and so contrary to custom as to lack the elements of good taste. But when he looked on, standing respectfully with his little group on the porch of the tavern, he found pathetic solemnity in the affair. The funeral of John Kavanagh had a peculiar dignity, suiting the man and his people.

Down the hill from the mansion came the cortège, moving very slowly.

The band which led the way intoned the solemn strains of Chopin's Funeral March. The musicians had been summoned from a far city and the organization was a famed one. When the muted cornets voiced the weird wail of the wonderful melody, above the dolor of the moaning basses, the spell of the music and of the scene took possession of Marthorn. He shook his head when one of his men asked a question; he choked and was not able to speak.

When the music came abreast the tavern porch tears sparkled in his eyes and he was obliged to stroke them away in order to see Clare Kavanagh clearly.

She sat very erect on her big black horse; her gaze was straight ahead. Her dark hair accentuated the paleness of her face.

They who gazed on her understood why she had chosen the garb she wore. She was habited in white, according to the provisions of her father's request. When she had come into his arms on that day of their reunion at Manor Verona she wore her graduation white, and the mental picture had been one of his dearest memories. His letter to her had explained his wishes, and she respected the whimsical view he took: "It's black that makes folks think of death—just death. They'll look at you and feel that I'm dead and you're alone. But the white—it will be as if I had stepped away for a bit of a rest." It was a pitiful attempt to reach out to her beyond the grave the protection of the Kavanagh personality.

"I apologize," murmured the incautious one whom Marthorn had protected the evening before. "I know

how they feel about her, now that I have seen her. After this I'll cuff the man who slurs her."

Kenneth had never visualized the girl in his thoughts, lacking the thrust of interest. She had been for him Kavanagh's daughter rather than Clare Kavanagh. In spite of what he had heard about her beauty he was not prepared for this striking figure she presented. For him there was unutterable pathos in her dignity. They called her "Queen of the Toban." Her poise and her demeanor fitted the title, but, somehow, one felt that she ought to have motherly arms about her in her sorrow.

One of the X. K. wangan bateaux was slung on wheels, and across the big boat were laid cant-dog handles. On these was propped the huge burial casket. There was no touch of color or of flower. On head and foot were coils of snubbing-warp. Eight men were standing in the bateau, bosses of swampers, choppers, drive, teamsters, sawyers, and boom-men. Timothy Mulkern was there. Six gigantic, slow-moving tote-road horses drew the makeshift catafalque which so perfectly characterized the life of the man who lay dead. On one coil of rope were his spiked boots; across the other coil was laid his belted jacket. Miles O'Corran, the X. K.'s best teamster, stood high on the bateau's prow and drove the horses.

Behind, in the dust stirred by the broad wheels, marched hundreds of men in uneven ranks. Their heads were bowed and they carried their hats in their hands. Women walked, too, many of them; little children trudged with their elders, gaping with the wonder of it all.

So rode John Kavanagh down the hill from the mansion, along the hollow of the valley, past the red-brick office, and up the slope to the parish church where little Père

Laflamme waited, his wet eyes staring at the great cross above the clustered graves.

Kavanagh had kept his promise. There were two bands. The second one was at the end of the long procession and played "Auld Lang Syne," hushing the strains reverently.

When all had passed and Marthorn had recovered his composure he discovered that most of his party had joined the marchers. He was annoyed by their disappearance, for the feeling was in him that he was inviting trouble by lingering in Ste. Agathe. After the repression of the funeral services trouble-makers might come looking for "the Temiscouata popple chaps." Possession of the name of Marthorn seemed to be equivalent to carrying around a bomb; somebody might light its fuse. Recognition of him might amount to that. He could depend on the discretion of his own party, but there were many other Temiscouata employees in the crowds at Ste. Agathe and all mouths could not be controlled.

"Look here, Jackson," he remarked to one of the men at his side, "I think we'd better walk up to the church and quietly cut out our party and make a start up-river." He led the way.

Only a small part of the mourners could find places in the little church; the others waited outside. Marthorn prudently stopped before he came to the throng, and sent ahead his men as skirmishers. But his isolation proved unfortunate. An officious Temiscouata timekeeper, wishing to curry favor with the son of the president, called to him. The busybody had a good position at one of the windows and offered to surrender it to Marthorn, who made no move to accept.

"But, Mr. Marthorn!" he insisted, giving the name exasperating prominence.

Marthorn shook his head and turned his back.

At the door of the church was Donald Kezar, volunteer chief usher and master of ceremonies.

Without haste, but resolutely, he forced his way down the steps and went to the man at the window. In guarded tones, affecting as much indifference as he could, he queried, "That man you just called to—you say his name is Marthorn?"

"Sure! That's Mr. Kenneth Marthorn."

Kezar pushed to the edge of the crowd and stared malevolently at the man whom he suspected.

Marthorn, venturing to face about again toward the church, saw menace in the stranger's countenance. The stare was disconcerting and Marthorn decided to stroll back to the tavern.

Kezar's thoughts were by no means clear and his plans were chaotic, but he did have the savage thought that he was allowing legitimate prey to escape. He wanted to make more certain of the status of this snob from down-river. He felt that he'd like to see Clare Kavanagh's face when she laid eyes on the man who had been named to her in that letter. The detaining of Marthorn seemed to be imperative. Kezar hastened after the engineer, controlling himself by effort of the desperate hypocrite, and presenting an expression that was almost bland when he overtook Marthorn.

"I heard your name by accident. I'll find a place for you in the church."

Marthorn wondered what kind of a trick his eyes had been playing him. This person now seemed rather cordial.

"I have some authority. My name is Kezar. My grandfather is the X. K. man of business."

"I'm going to be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Kezar," blurted the other, with one of his disarming smiles. "Some quarrel I had no part in seems to have strained relations between my father and Mr. Kavanagh. It has been borne in upon me that I'm not very welcome in this village. I thank you, but I'd better be going."

"As to grudges, death ought to settle 'em! I think it would be showing respect if a man as high as you are in the Temiscouata would sit in with the mourners."

"I'll be excused, I think!"

"Everybody in that crowd heard what your name is. They'll take it for a slight on the family if you walk off like this. It might start a disturbance. I reckon you'd better come in. It's the safest way." He put his hand on Marthorn's shoulder and the engineer perceived that the eyes of the crowd were upon him. There seemed to be a threat about the whole situation; it was, he told himself again, a hair-trigger proposition. He went to the church feeling like a captive.

They made way for him at Kezar's command and closed in behind. In the church his conductor pushed him ahead up the center aisle, drove up a man to give Marthorn a seat, and then stood over him like a guard. Kezar did not return to his duties at the door. He expected that Clare would come down the center aisle on her way out. It would afford opportunity to put Marthorn in her way; Kezar was wildly impatient to study their faces at the confronting. But when the services were over Clare stepped quickly past the altar and disappeared with Father Pierre through the door leading into the priest's house.

The aisle was cleared and the bearers bore away the heavy casket.

"I'm very much obliged to you," said Kenneth, grasping Kezar's lax hand. "I'd like to have you know that I have sincerely paid my respects to-day."

"You'd better come along with me. I can show you some more attentions," urged Donald, desperately seeking to keep his hold on this key with which to unlock a possible secret.

"Impossible, my dear sir! I'm starting at once for up-river."

"But isn't there somebody here in the village you'd like to see—have a little chat with?" probed his guide, awkwardly.

"I think there's nobody." Kenneth surveyed his new acquaintance with some curiosity.

"I suppose you are pretty well acquainted with Miss Clare Kavanagh." It was a bolder thrust and Donald narrowed his eyes and peered into the face near his; they were standing in the church, allowing the others to go creaking and crowding out.

"I have never met her." This, after what Kezar had read in the letter, was considered by him as barefaced falsehood. He decided that there was a secret.

"She was four years in college in a place that your father had something to do with."

"At Manor Verona? Is it possible?" Young Mr. Marthorn's countenance showed polite surprise.

"Wasn't your sister there?" Kezar had been furnished with certain facts by Doctor March.

"Oh yes! My sister was graduated this year."

"Then it would be the right thing for you to stop over here till you could give Miss Clare your sister's best regards and all that!"

It occurred to Mr. Marthorn that Mr. Kezar's ideas of

the social convenances were decidedly crude or else some very peculiar reason was animating this gentleman.

"Thank you! I'll not intrude!"

"Up here you don't have to be so almighty genteel as those snobs are down-river. I'll go and tell her that you want to see her!"

This insistence was coarse and was becoming wearisome. But Kenneth did not propose to set himself up as instructor in good manners or to show resentment which might lead to argument. He confined himself to a bland, "No, I thank you!" His reticence provoked Kezar all the more.

"I hope you are not carrying the family grudge against her."

"My dear fellow, I don't know what a grudge is. But let me remind you that my feelings in regard to Miss Kavanagh, or anybody else in the world, are my own private business. I really don't deserve all the interest you're taking in me. Good day!"

The aisle was clear and he walked away.

In the churchyard one of the bands was droning a dirge. The body of Kavanagh was being committed to the grave. None of the Temiscouata men were in sight; they were mingled with the throngs above the grave. He made himself as inconspicuous as he could in a corner of the church porch and waited. The church seemed the safest place for him. The recent encounter with the man who called himself Kezar suggested that there was a determination to provoke the son of Stephen Marthorn. The church ought to prove sanctuary for a man who wanted to avoid combat, he decided, and he remained there. His men must pass that way when the services were over.

Donald took advantage of his intimacy as her lieutenant; he went along the short corridor by which Clare had left the church and entered Father Pierre's house.

In the living-room solicitous Dame Barbe was ministering to the girl, bathing her forehead, clucking kindly solace. The little priest sat beside Clare, patting her hand with a meaning tenderness which was better than words.

Clare turned desolate eyes up at the visitor.

"What else can I do?" he asked.

She shook her head.

Father Laflamme, usually meek, showed a bit of irritation; the young man had bolted in without knocking, his demeanor was far from fitting a consoler, his request was abrupt, and there was a shade of sullen insolence in his manner. "There is nothing for her now except what we are doing in our poor way, my son. All has been done—what she has done has been done nobly. She will rest and be well in a little while."

"Come with me! I'll take you home, Clare."

"I'll stay here for a time."

"I want you to feel there's nobody in the world so ready to help you as I am." There was jealous hardness in his eyes.

"You have been truly good and kind. I'll thank you when I can find words, Don."

"I don't need any thanks. I want to be the one you'll call on first for everything."

"Yes, I know you are willing to help me." The weariness of long suffering was in her tones, her gaze wandered from him, and she did not seem to be comprehending fully or to take interest. Her voice was the voice

of one who uttered words without matching thoughts to them.

"She needs rest—to be quiet," said the priest, wrinkling his brow and wagging his head meaningly. "There's one way you may help. Go and tell her good friends to stay away and give her time to rest."

But the lover was in no mood to be dismissed in that fashion. "Folks in trouble ought to have their minds taken off their troubles." In the case of young Kezar, deference was not prompted by delicacy; he had little of the latter quality. When he deferred it was because fear or self-interest prompted; anger could make a rent in his hypocrisy and expose his truer nature. "Clare, I want to show you that I'm your friend, always ready. Here's something I feel you ought to know, and know right now. Excuse me for breaking in on your sorrow, but I'm a mourner with you—and I'm loyal to John Kavanagh, even though he has passed away from us."

He noted that his preface had secured a portion of her attention.

"M'sieu' Kezar," exploded Dame Barbe, autocrat of the priest's household, "it's mos' a wonder you don't bring in beeg, *gross tambour* from the *bande de musique* and pound it in this room for to make noise to bodder this *pauvre enfant*."

"If you feel that I ought to know anything now, tell me, Don; I'll trust in your judgment."

"Kenneth Marthorn is here." He leaned forward and stared at her as a hunter intently regards game after the shot has been fired.

He did not produce an effect which satisfied either his jealousy or his hopes. He did not understand her expression. When she narrowed her eyes he wondered

whether she was resenting his interference or displaying dislike for Marthorn.

"He's here shaming the funeral and making fun of it," he persisted. "I thought you ought to know it."

"You should be sure before you say things to hurt the heart so much," rebuked Father Pierre.

"Sure? I *am* sure! I have just been talking with him, I tell you! He must have been the man who almost started a riot on the streets last night. Doctor March told me of it. The description fits Marthorn," he lied. "And he was in the church, sneering and scoffing. I stood right over him. I heard him. I would have thrown him out if it had not been for making a disturbance. I have just been talking to him about it. He said that a girl ought to be ashamed of herself, riding horseback at her father's funeral. Doc March will tell you!"

"I believe he would have too much sense and kindness to tell this poor child any such thing," stormed the priest. "Why do you come here at this sad time with such wicked tattle?"

"Because Clare ought to know so that she can have him and his gang thrown out of this village. I have come to you for the word, Clare."

In her turn she leaned forward, fixing him with a stare as intent as his own. "Do you think that I would suggest an attack on persons who have come to my father's funeral? Donald, that's an insult!" The fire of the Kavanagh was in her eyes.

"But when they come to scoff and sneer—"

"They are here. That's enough. If they show no respect, they are shaming themselves, not us."

"But a man can't make such talk in Sainte Agathe and get away without taking his medicine."

"I'd be sorry to think that one of my father's men would disgrace himself."

"He'd be doing himself honor if he should beat up the son of old Marthorn—old Temiscouata Marthorn. You ought to feel—"

"Donald! Hush that talk! If a man in this village lays finger on any one of those persons I'll have the rascal jailed. Go and give out that word!"

So, she was protecting Kenneth Marthorn!

"Go, I tell you! If you have heard the threats you must know who the rowdies are. I'll hold you responsible!"

"Not for Marthorn!"

"Yes, for Marthorn!" She stood up and vibrated a finger at him. She had thrown off the prostration of her collapse after the day's ordeal. She set back her shoulders as if she were resolved to bear worthily the mantle which John Kavanagh's passing had obliged her to assume. "You came in here asking what you could do. I have told you. Do it!"

He obeyed, going sulkily, returning along the corridor by which he had come. He left the door open and Dame Barbe slammed it, putting into that slam greater volume of resentment than most folks could express in speech.

"To come to you with such words! I thought he had better nature," stammered the priest, surveying her righteous anger with much of the awe he had shown when in the presence of John Kavanagh himself.

"Oh, we shall forgive Donald! We must forgive him," she cried, controlling herself, showing the sudden shift from temper to tolerance which had been characteristic of her father in his dealings with men. "Knighthood's excess of zeal, Father Pierre! That's all!"

She put on her hat and picked up her riding-crop.

"I'm better, Father Pierre! I thank you, Dame Barbel! Your hands on my forehead were just like the mother touch I have felt in my dreams."

She went to the window which overlooked the graves. The crowds were slowly scattering. There was the flush of the sunlight on busy spades. "Good-by, daddy," she whispered. "No, I'll not say good-by—I'll never say good-by to you. I'll come back at sunset when all the rest are gone."

Her horse was at the post near the cottage door. The priest helped her to mount. The lane to the highway took her past the porch of the church. The crowds parted to give her thoroughfare, the men standing with hats in their hands. Voices were stilled when she came in sight, and in the sudden silence the declaration of Donald Kezar, whom rage had made blind to her presence, rang out clearly: "I'll be responsible for you fifteen minutes. That's time for you and your Temiscouata sculch to get to your canoes!"

Clare halted her horse. The young man who leaned against the pillar of the porch, his arms folded, had enough of resemblance to Cora Marthorn to be recognizable as her brother. That resemblance, stirring bitter recollection, brought color into Clare's cheeks and her lips showed only the thin red line of repression of emotions.

"I think I made it fairly evident that I did not care for you as a friend when you volunteered; now I most distinctly inform you that I don't need you as my keeper."

Kezar employed tactics which had served his need many times in the past: now he said what would rouse adherents who would bulwark him in case of attack.

"The snob who comes into Sainte Agathe and slurs Clare Kavanagh can't stay here. You may be old Marthorn's son, but you ain't big enough to get away with anything like that!"

Kezar heard the menacing murmurs and was made bolder.

"I assure you and all others in hearing that I have not slurred Miss Kavanagh."

She struck her horse and the animal leaped close to the porch. "By what right do you two men bandy my name in public?"

Marthorn stood up straight and took off his hat. But the smile he gave her did not soften her mounting indignation. The cad! The man who had eloped with some unknown creature. The rake! The frequenter of loose resorts. The snob! Self-satisfied conqueror of women and brother of smug Cora Marthorn! The son of the man who had insulted her in public and had driven her father to an act which had so shamed him! All the poison of Harriet Tell's gossip attacked her thoughts. And there was reflection more ugly still! The Temiscouata popple! The Temiscouata president! Did not the two make the real reason why the spades were flashing the sunlight in the yard of the graves? She had heard her father's words of bitter blame in his weakness and his sorrow! She did not reason clearly. The Kavanagh prejudices, the Kavanagh spirit of retaliation and of combat, were rioting in her. With all the ardor of her nature, suppressed for so long and now blazing, it seemed that she had been left to carry on the enmities as well as the affairs of the X. K.

"Step away from that man!" she commanded Donald. But though her tones were harsh, her heart was forgiving the champion. His zeal was unwise—that was all.

"Gad!" mumbled a man on the outskirts of the crowd, getting close to a neighbor's ear. "Old X. K. didn't take all his grit to purgatory with him!"

"Your name is Kenneth Marthorn?"

"That is my name, Miss Kavanagh."

"Your intrusion here this day is contemptible!"

"I understood there was a general invitation—"

"For honest men and decent men who knew my father and respected him. You're like the rest of your family. Your conceit makes you think that you can dispense with all good taste in dealing with what you call your social inferiors." The sneer was delivered with flaming anger.

His face frankly expressed his amazement at this outburst; what his mother had told him made him aware that no friendly feeling existed in the Kavanagh family for the Marthorns; but this furious attack by the daughter seemed to be supplementing the wanton assault by the father.

Marthorn tried to find words for protest and apology, but merely stammered ineptly. Husky men were sifting out of the throng and advancing slowly and with menace.

"I have had enough of the airs and sneers of the Marthorn family. I am no longer at Manor Verona, forsaken and despised." Her face was crimson and her eyes flamed. It was more of the avatar of the ancient spirit which had whirled dizzy fires within her father to the undoing of his resolutions and his better nature. More than ever did she feel that she was alone in her weakness and her strength and must voice rebuke and declare antagonism. "I am here—with my own—upon my own!" She swept wide gesture. "Take notice! I am the Kavanagh!"

The declaration was made with thrilling intensity of tone. There was something in her assumption of full authority that held her men in their tracks, though the ugly diapason of their growls threatened.

Marthorn's flush rivaled her color "Just one moment," he pleaded. "I am only a Marthorn, and that's what seems to be the trouble with me, Miss Kavanagh. I have no quarrel with you. I never saw you until to-day. I had no business to come here. I apologize for intruding. I will at once go away."

"Apologize for your sneers and your jeers," called Kezar, who had backed away when Clare had commanded.

"On that ground I have no apologies to make."

Beside herself, she raised her riding-crop; he came two steps forward, placing himself in reach of the stroke which she threatened. "If I have said one word here against you or your father I deserve to be lashed by you all the way to my canoe."

"I heard you" insisted the tongue of the trouble-maker. He was using his weapon after his custom.

Kenneth did not take his eyes from hers. "The fellow lies!" Then he bowed respectfully. When he faced her again he was astonished by the change in her demeanor. There had been the convincing tone of the honest gentleman in his calm, curt declaration. There was convincing sincerity in his poise. There was the same subtle rebuke that the sister had opposed to vulgar challenge and ill-considered insult. Clare lived over again those moments of her anguished shame when Cora Marthorn had won the victory over passion by the exercise of good breeding's self-control. "Ould Jawn Kavanagh's daughter! Ould Jawn Kavanagh's daughter!" It seemed as if the demon that had just incited her to be braggart and

bully now whispered the taunting words in her ear. Her lips trembled; she shut her eyes to avoid the level gaze.

"To the river with him!" bawled a man. "To the river—on a rail!" Other voices took up the cry.

She whirled her horse and faced her men. She shook her crop in their faces. She shifted her anger from Marthorn to them. "Away with you, you scalawags! No actions like that shall shame Sainte Agathe. Away, I say!"

It was astounding change. They goggled at her as sheep might survey a shepherd suddenly turned into a wolf.

The man named Mike nudged Mulkern. "Ain't it the way of him all over? Hell! They ain't burying Kavanagh to-day! There he is with a white dress on!"

She turned back to Marthorn and for an instant seemed about to offer some sort of an apology. But she frowned and lifted her chin proudly. "Are you here alone?" she demanded.

"No, I have my party of engineers"

"You'll please collect them. I'll see you safely to your canoes."

"We'll not trouble you to that extent, Miss Kavanagh," he returned, matching her pride with his own. "We shall not require guardians."

"If more folks had proper guardians they would not make such fools of themselves. I do not except myself. On this matter I insist! I shall escort you. I'll have no disturbance in this village on this day."

It was not necessary for Marthorn to collect his men; they had grouped close to him when danger seemed to be at hand.

"I ask your pardon for my very ungallant objection," he said. "I accept your courtesy."

"I do not mean it as a courtesy. It's a precaution."

He stepped down from the porch and walked beside her horse, his men at his heels. Marthorn found something picturesque and rather dramatic in this safe-conduct through the country of the declared enemy.

"Now show your manners, men," she called, imperiously. "Make way there! No talk! Let them have no story to carry up-river."

"Open the boom! Give the pulp-timber passagel!" cried somebody.

"Old X. K. never would have popple mixed with honest logs," said another.

On the way down the hill Marthorn ventured to speak to her. "Miss Kavanagh, I hope you'll allow me to repeat—"

"Any conversation with you, sir, may cause me to repeat some of my own folly. It is sometimes hard for me to control myself"

"But that fellow back there lied deliberately. I am grateful—"

"For this service?"

"I am, with all my heart."

"Are you grateful enough to do a favor for me which will please me very much?"

"Yes," he replied, with earnestness.

"Then please don't open your mouth again until you're out of my hearing," was her tart rejoinder.

He obeyed so implicitly that he merely removed his hat and bowed when the little party arrived at the pull-out place. She sat her horse rigidly, her countenance expressionless, until Marthorn and his men were on their

way. Then she struck the animal and he went off at a gallop, along the shore, through the valley and up the hill to the mansion.

"Ho, warder of the castle!" jested Marthorn's canoe-mate, resting his bow paddle in order to draw forth pipe and pouch. "Up portcullis! Down drawbridge! Here comes the chatelaine! 'I am the Kavanagh!' Jiminy ginger! chief, Bernhardt never did a better bit at end of the third act. Some pep! 'I am the—'"

"Shut up!" barked Marthorn. "Get that pipe filled and lighted and that paddle into the water!"

After a half-hour of unbroken silence the aide began to wonder what Marthorn was thinking about. "It's either some big idea that's keeping him quiet," he decided in his own mind, "or else he's a bear about obeying her orders to keep his mouth shut. Well, I reckon I'd do anything that girl told me to do, even to standing up, jumping through, rolling over, and sneezing!"

CHAPTER XV

Noel the Bear, on his pilgrimage, meets other men who are adventuring on matters of their own.

CAME faring through the rocky passes and along the forest's aisles old Noel the Bear.

From his hermitage on the isle of Porus he had gazed across the flashing waters of the lake of Nahmakantah and had spied on the wooded slope of the beech ridge a flaming leaf, banneret which heralded the coming of the frost. That leaf, for him, was summons to begin his journey to a yearly tryst. It was near the time of the tribal Feast of the Maize. As chief, he was called to the trail which led to the place of rendezvous, the Nubble of Telos, mount of hornblende from which generations of Indians had chipped the flint for their hatchets and their arrow-heads.

In his pack he put wild honey and parched corn and sweet raisins, the dried fruit of the vines he had trained on the trellis of his camp's porch. He paddled from isle to shore and hid his canoe; his way was along the blazed trail, over the Height o' Land into the valley of the Toban. He did not need the age-healed scars of the trees for his guidance—he went surely and rapidly, so rapidly that only the arabesque of his seamed face suggested his hundred and two years. He went soundlessly, treading the duff with moccasins. Therefore, for him the woods

were tenanted, the woods seem empty aisles when one travels noisily.

Ahead of him the challenging cock-partridge beat mimic drum in diminuendo roll; fat rabbits loped lazily from his path; a surprised bear tumbled off the trail and, after the one crash, escaped on padded feet with step as noiseless as that of old Noel. Mild does surveyed him, standing at attention so near the path that he could see the veins in their transparent, upcocked ears. He himself was of the forest; he did not bring that foreign, terrorizing scent from outside; the staring dumb folks accepted him as something like themselves.

He read the woods as he passed along; he had never learned to read the printed page and he cared nothing for the news of the world. In the woods he read what he wanted to know, spying thickening of moss, turn of twig, cock of leaf, graying of rabbit fur to hint at early winter—for a man who earns his flour and pork by the setting of traps must be prepared by foreknowledge of what the winter is to be like.

He scooped water from running streams with his bark cup, dipping where the green moss fringed a brimming bowl in the brook. He did not halt to eat; he munched raisins as he trudged on, and was not hungry nor was he fully fed.

So, journeying steadily, he came in the course of time to the slope which led down into the valley of the Toban and heard faintly the distant, mellow rumble of falling waters. It was the Hulling Machine. The Long Carry is there. They who undertake the Toban have precipitous cliffs to climb at the Hulling Machine, and the way up the gorge is along a ledgy and broken trail. Therefore Deadman's Strip is a rather sociable place,

after all, because journeying parties linger along the trail and rest there after tussling heroically with canoes and duffle and goods. One is quite likely to meet friends there.

Noel the Bear came upon Paul Sabatis at the Hulling Machine.

The young man was sitting on his overturned canoe, looking up at "Old Stone-snipe" at his work, clinking a fresh text into the wall of the gray cliff.

"Huh!" said the old Indian, by way of greeting.

"Good day to you, Chief Noel," returned the young Indian, less taciturn; but he gave the old man only somber gaze.

The chief sat down on a lift of ledge opposite Sabatis and they continued to stare at each other in duel of eyes.

"Where?" demanded old Noel, at last.

"Into the north."

"What do?"

Sabatis hesitated for a few moments. When he began to talk it was with the sour air of a man who gave out information unwillingly and was talking to accomplish some secret purpose of his own.

"I am going to explore for metes and bounds. Our old treaties have been given into my hands. I have had some training in law. Our fishing and hunting privileges, our treaty rights to go upon lands for birch bark and basket stuff, have been disputed, have been taken away from us. Game wardens and timber bosses of the big syndicates who never heard of the treaties are browbeating our people. I am going into the woods. I am going for facts. I have been down-country for some weeks, talking with big lawyers. I have money now," he added, bitterly. "I'll spend it doing some good with it, if I can."

"Much talk!" commented Noel. "School! Make even Indian talk much."

"Perhaps so."

"Too much talk."

"It needs talk if we're going to make them listen to reason and give back the rights they have promised in treaties."

"Not mean treaties! No care! White men robbers! They take. Don't give back. You waste money, waste time. No, I mean other talk you make. You don't do. Now go hide in woods. Afraid you do, eh?"

Paul flushed and looked away from the keen stare.

"Talk much. Make fool about old treaties. Run away down to city—run away up to woods! It's to fool yourself mebbe, eh?"

"I don't know what talk you mean, Chief Noel."

"Ship-knee man pass Porus way. Squat down on log to watch me bee-lining. Tell me what bad talk you make. You say you marry *Royal Lis Blanc*? No!"

"It's a lie! I never said that. A dirty dog started that lie."

"And now you do him hurt, eh, take revenge, make excuse because of your uncle?"

"I did threaten him! His lying tongue stirred the trouble between two old men. I hardly knew what I was saying. I did mean to follow him and have my revenge."

"Too much talk!" insisted the old man.

"Yes, too much talk! I came to my senses. I had made a promise. I ran away. I'm running away again. I am keeping my promise."

"You like to kill him?"

"Not now."

"Good school. Make Indian all over," taunted the old

man. "Huh! Ship-knee man tell me what good reason you have. I would kill if man do such hurt to me." His shrewd stare was appraising the young man's expression. Sabatis did not reply.

"But you listen," the chief went on, sternly. "You keep hands off. It's from me. I command. I protect him."

Sabatis looked up and noted that the old hermit was absorbed by his work on the cliff. "Yes, I know why you are protecting him!" There was ugly anger as well as bitter reproach in his low tones. "Lola Hébert told me what you did. You're a wicked old fool!"

"It's the true marriage—by the law of our tribe!"

"I say it's no marriage except the man who takes a girl in that way is honest and true and loves her and will be faithful, and makes her his wife in the eyes of the world, instead of hiding guilt in a hut in the woods. Oh, good God, Noel! You have gone crazy in your old age. This is the white man's country, not the Indian's! We must obey the white man's laws. You helped that sneak to ruin Lola Hébert!"

"He swore. It was to me. I have his oath. It was law before the white man came here," old Noel insisted, doggedly.

"Yes, that's the damnable thing you made her believe! She would still be a happy girl if it hadn't been for you. He has taken everything from her—even himself, at last! He has forsaken her."

"No dare to do that! *I am alive!*" declared the chief, standing up and rapping gaunt hand on his breast.

"I tell you he has gone north into the woods—he didn't even go to her to say good-by," raged the young man. "She sent me a letter." He winced when he said

it, as if the memory of that letter stung like the lash of a whip. "Her heart is broken. He is in the woods with Kavanagh's daughter—but I pray to God that Lola won't hear that! He is courting Kavanagh's daughter. He has become her field boss."

"Mebbe. All right. He works for money. But he's Lola's husband. You're coward! School! Huh! He has sworn the oath. You talk much. You don't do. I forbid you to do. I do not talk. But I shall do."

"Oh, if you could only undo what you have done!" mourned Paul, beating palm of his hand against his forehead, as if his thoughts were wild things which he strove to chastise. "The renegade! The pig! The sneak! And you helped him! I promised her that I wouldn't harm him—that I would help her because she had made her choice. Understand this, Noel! It isn't because I'm a coward that I'm not following him up to kill him for what he has done to her and to me! It isn't because of your orders to me. It's because I love poor Lola Hébert enough to keep more sorrow from her if I can. That's too much talk! I don't want to talk! But, O God my Father! I have been keeping it all inside of me for so long! I could talk only to trees and empty air! But I am not betraying her secret when I speak out to you. I speak out to tell you that if you were not so old I would beat your face because you helped to bring shame to an honest girl. She is ruined. She is thrown aside. Hell take you and him! The oath amounts to that!" He snapped fingers under the chief's nose.

Paul had been studying the texts carved on the cliff, whiling away his rest-period. He forgot old Noel's limitations in education; he pointed to an inscription which time had garnished with inlay of mosses. "I

am not ashamed to tell you the truth about how I love her. Your orders to me! Bah! What says that text from the Bible?"

"No can read," grunted the old chief.

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' It's holy command to keep hands off. But it's my love for Lola that's protecting him rather than your commands or even that, up there!" He raised his tones, forgetting caution.

"Obey ye the commandments of the Lord your God," warned the hermit, turning from the cliff's wall his face of rebuke and wagging his white beard.

"Good advice, old Nick-and-Tick-It," commented a new arrival who had come plodding up the trail. "Good advice, even for Injuns." The commentator was Romeo Shank, chief fire warden of the Toban. He was on his patrol. "Look here, Sabatis, did you learn anything at your school that's better 'n what you find in the good old Bible?" It was clumsy satire instead of kindly inquiry.

Paul was not in the mood for jest at that time. His rage had not moderated. "Shank, I don't propose to stand any more sneers about my education. I worked hard to get it. It's mine."

"Hold on, boy! Hold on! I'm glad you've got an education. It's a good thing for all of us to know that there's a good education walking around up in this section. I want to use that education right this minute."

His few possessions made a modest bulge in a meal-sack pack; he unknotted the sack, pulled out an empty tin can, rolled it slowly and read aloud, with drawling enunciation of syllables, "*Cham-pig-nons One Cho-ix Sèv-res près Par-is!*" Now what in the name of the blue-gilled honky-donk, Sabatis, was ever put up in that can?

I 'ain't been able to tell by the smell of it!" He took another hopeful sniff and shook his head.

"Mushrooms," stated the young man, curtly.

"Toadstools?" This was plain incredulity. "Why, the woods up here are full of 'em!"

"No; mushrooms—from France!"

Mr. Shank laid down the can and pulled out a small glass jar. "Riddle, come riddle, come roo! Here is number two! Hoss de O—e—u—"

"*Hors-d'œuvre*," explained Paul, impatiently. "A side-dish, Shank. Fancy food of some sort."

"Ex-actly!" cried Mr. Shank. "Now I believe your song! It takes fancy grub to fit a fancy bunch." He threw glass and can into the gorge. "I picked 'em out of the rest of the discard at their last camping-place. The names set me to wondering what kind of grub it is that rich men tuck into 'em. Reckoned it must be good if they'd take all the trouble to tote so much of it into the woods. Dago talk for toadstools and fancy grub, eh? Well, as old Nubb Bodfish said, after he had dreamt about hell, 'what I've missed is my gain.'"

He turned shrewd squint up at the hermit and hailed that busy person. "Hey, there, old Chisel-pusher, forget your Bible for a little while and whack out 'Welcome to Our City' and sign it 'X. K.,' because old Temiscouata Marthorn himself is on his way up-river, with all his dude gang—and I reckon he has come to tell Clare Kavanagh how to run her business after this." He turned to Paul. "He has been sending understrappers to her ever since Old X. K. was put where he couldn't lay the flat of his hand on a Temiscouata sneak. Looks like he thought he'd better come himself. Daughter is along, too. The one that went to school with Clare."

But his listeners did not appear to be interested. The hermit went on with his mallet and chisel; Paul surveyed the ground moodily; Noel the Bear, his face set as hard as the features of a stone gargoyle, looked down the trail.

"Cuss an Injun," muttered the overflowing Mr. Shank, with the ire of a gossip rebuffed. "Never seems to be interested in anything that's sensible!"

There was no further conversation. The warden filled his pipe and smoked. He displayed tolerant interest in the text which the hermit was finishing. According to Mr. Shank's opinion the current offering was very timely, for it was the well-known counsel to those "who are weary and heavy laden." He had come past the Marthorn party and had carefully observed all the details of its outfitting!

He had sat on a stump and seen the magnate's guides make the Castonia carry!

"I hope they'll see what old Mallet-walloper has been chopping out," he said, talking to himself in default of listeners. "It may cheer 'em up to notice that their case has been 'tended to in Holy Writ."

And Mr Shank himself was cheered somewhat. Guide Fogarty, of the Marthorn expedition, hove into sight. Here came white man and friend!

"I've been sent on ahead with a letter to his son," reported Mr. Fogarty to the fire warden, glad because he had an excuse to loaf for a few moments on the trail. "The old buck has changed his mind. Ain't going to try to get up as far as the son is. Tells the son to come down and meet the party!" He ducked his head in the direction from which he had come.

"They'd better stay in one place and eat up about a ton

of that Dago grub," suggested Mr. Shank, "and then come along."

"He calls what he's doing 'roughing it,'" declared Mr. Fogarty, scornfully. "Says the doctor told him to come up here into the woods and rough it. Jeemro Susskattahoop! Rough it! Do you know what I had to do? He's got an air cushion for daytime in the canoe and an air camp-chair to loaf in whilst they're cooking vittles for him, and an air mattress for night. Talk about your human bellowses! It was me down on my knees about half the time, my back humped up and my mouth glued onto a nickel nipple, jamming in air till my eyes stuck out like the horns of a yearling buck. And then, in the morning, it was let all the air out so that the mattresses could be stowed. I have heard solemn sounds in my life, but the whistle of that air beat all the wails the County Kerry banshee ever wailed! I'm a guide. I'll be cussed if I'm a bicycle-pump. I quit cold this morning! Started back. That's how I was picked to carry the letter up-country."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, hiring with the Temiscouata bunch."

"I reckon so. But we're all getting extra pay."

"Bribe-money," declared Mr. Shank, loftily. "And how much was paid to have you guides keep your mouths shut about that deer that was shot in closed time by the feller that's courting old Steve's daughter?"

"The deer wasn't shot. He fell dead!"

Mr. Shank blinked his suspicions. But Mr. Fogarty was emphatic.

"He heard old Marthorn say that the red leggings and red hat and red vest the Old He One is wearing were so that nobody would mistake Marthorn for a deer; then

the deer laid down, rolled over, and died laughing." Mr. Fogarty rose and tapped out his pipe dottle and Mr. Shank trod on the coals with the caution of a fire warden. "There's only one reason," stated the guide, "why I'm sorry to be leaving the Marthorn party. You noticed that sparrow-sized Guinea—the splinter in the white cap, didn't you? He's the city cook Marthorn brought along to fix up the fancy dishes."

"I saw him. He was sitting and chittering like a chipmunk on a stump, wiggling his goatee the same way a squirrel twitches his tail, and sassing Bill Welch about the firewood."

"Well, the idea is," explained Mr. Fogarty "some day Bill will wrap him up in that white bonnet, put him in one of those cans with a name on it like that Guinea's name sounds, and throw him overboard in some place where there's plenty of white water. I'll be sorry to miss it!"

"Just a minute!" pleaded the warden when Fogarty started away up the trail. "What talk did you hear Marthorn and his understrappers make about the X. K.?"

"None of your business," returned Mr. Fogarty, briskly. "That may be on account of that bribe-money you have just slurred about, it may be because old Marthorn knows too much to talk over important matters where ears in this section can hear, it may be because blowing up them mattresses blew all my memory out of me, or it may be because I'm loyal enough to the memory of Old X. K. to give any valuable tips to his daughter with me own mouth, Mr. Shank. Take your pick of reasons! I have no word of tattle for you." He turned to Paul. "What way, boy?" It was patronizing demand.

"Up the river."

"I have a spare canoe hidden at the dead-water. But I'll give you a hand with yours on the carry and take bow paddle."

The young man lifted his canoe and set his shoulders under the center thwarts. "I journey alone." He went on up the trail.

"Two in a canoe make easier work than one, Shank," proffered the guide. "Come on!"

But Mr. Shank thrust arm through the loop of his pack and started at right angles to the Toban Valley. "I don't expect the river to get on fire unless old Marthorn tries to come it over Clare Kavanagh if he meets her up-country," he said, tartly. "So I'll let the river take care of itself. Good day, Mr. Fogarty! Those Dago vittles seem to have disagreed with you."

The edge of the guide's friendly spirit was not dulled. "Hey, there, old Noel! Isn't it about time for you to start into the wild country after that beaver-tail? Well, come along with me—I'm bound north."

"Huh!" remarked the old chief, and he started along the trail by which Fogarty had come.

"Well, I *can* paddle my own canoe and I'd rather be alone on the river than blowing up air mattresses in the midst of the gay and the proud," Mr. Fogarty assured himself. So he went on his way with a mocking good-by to the hermit, who was left chiseling and was giving no heed to those who had met at the foot of his cliff, had clashed with their passions and their projects, and had gone their ways.

At the foot of the long carry, in the late afternoon, Noel the Bear found a small village of tents—the night home of the Marthorn expedition. The chattering chef,

a hopping homunculus, was bossing his surly woodsman helpers; he comically answered to that likeness ascribed to him—an angry squirrel. Before each tent a camp-fire sent up its sparks and lazy coils of smoke shed the incense of burning birch. The canoes, a whole flotilla, were turned upside down on the sandy beach which the river eddy had spatted smooth. Men and women strolled or lounged in hammock chairs; they were patently metropolitan folk whose fashionable outing garb, mocking real rough-and-ready clothing, seemed more like masquerade attire than wonted garments.

The Mellicite chief stalked straight on along the carry trail, his eyes observing all, though he appeared to take no notice.

Miss Marthorn directed her father's attention by a touch on his arm.

"There's another Indian—an old one!"

"He may have more sense than the other fellow. Here! You!" he called, sharply. "Yes, I mean you!" he added when Noel halted. "Come here!"

Colonel Marthorn, roughing it in his air chair, did not lift his head from the comfortable rest at the back. "I need an Indian to go along with my party. My daughter and her friends want to know the Indian names for places and find out about the Indian ways of camping, and so forth. Go and ask for Mr. Durkee, the head guide. He will arrange for pay. You understand, eh?"

In the Indian's sunken eyes there was a little flicker which men seldom saw there. But that light did not signal resentment, one could discern, because the creases at the corners of his mouth deepened in a grim smile. The sunset was red, but the colors in which Colonel Marthorn had arrayed his portly form in order to dis-

tinguish himself perfectly from any wandering deer made the sunset seem pale. Sunburn had painted on his face a flame almost as lurid as his garb. Old Noel stared steadily at the colonel for a long time in silence and then set his eyes on the blazing westering sun and sighed in evident relief.

"By gad!" whispered a gentleman in Colonel Marthorn's party to another guest, "of course that old buck doesn't know enough to carry out a fine job of satire like that, but for unconscious work it's very peachy."

"I say! Understand?"

"No can go! No time!"

"The Indians up this way seem to be very busy persons," grumbled the colonel. "A young Indian overtook us to-day and refused to take the job. A saucy fellow—wouldn't tell us his name! Did you meet him? Do you know him?"

There was malice in the old Indian's unaccustomed humor—mere good-natured raillery was not possible with him.

"Yes! Busy! He's doctor. Me doctor! Cure eyes for animals in woods. Right now much to do."

He marched off down the trail.

"Confound it, that old wretch has just insulted me!" exploded the colonel, after a few moments of meditation. "That's what he meant by looking at my clothes as he did."

In a few moments the chief guide came past the master's throne, on tour of inspection. "Durkee, who was that old Indian who passed here?"

"Noel the Bear, sir. Chief of the Mellicite tribe, sir."

"There was another Indian I talked with to-day. I meant to ask you before who he might be."

"Paul Sabatis, of the Tarratines, sir. College graduate. The newspapers printed a lot about him when he was captain of the football team."

Colonel Marthorn devoted some moments to deep reflection. "Durkee, have you any dukes in disguise among your guides?"

"I think not, Colonel."

"Any uncrowned kings I'm likely to bump into up here?"

"Oh no."

"I was beginning to have my worries," confided the colonel to one of the guests, a home-office dignitary of the Great Temiscouata Company. "I am up here to distribute the balm of a diplomatic peace and show how tact may win battles. I seem to be getting everybody into a belligerent state of mind, starting with the aborigines!"

Guide Swenson, setting tauter the tacks of fly-ropes on the colonel's tent, heard that dialogue without understanding any of the big words.

"He ban 'fraid he bomp into some king up here. I could tal him somet'ing—he batter not bomp into a queen," he said at the guides' table when supper was served. "Clare Kavanagh she ban op on the X. K. lands."

When Colonel Marthorn mentioned his "worries" he smiled and touched his sentiments with tone of irony. However, when he lay down that night on his air mattress the murmur of the water in the river eddies did not lull him to sleep immediately. He was conscious of a certain sense of uneasiness; his uneasiness was aggravated by the fact that he was not able to determine just what was the matter with him. The big outdoors rather awed him—he admitted that. Bulwarked in his New York office,

he had accepted deference and obedience as natural perquisites attached to his position.

He had become aware that the toilers in his expeditionary entourage, the woodsmen who served him as guides and helpers, did not display the humility he had expected. They did not seem to be impressed at all by his personality. He had been led to believe that his coming into the north country would have value in emphasizing the importance of the Great Temiscouata Company; Vice-president Donaldson had so assured him. Donaldson had pictured a sort of triumphal progress.

Behind the paneled oak of his New York office, Colonel Marthorn had entertained not the least doubt that he would be able to put Clare Kavanagh where she belonged when he should arrive face to face with that young woman. In the absence of any special information about her, except that she was a sullen, ill-mannered recluse in his daughter's class at Manor Verona, he had not troubled himself with any apprehension about his ability to make her see her best interests, or, failing in that, to subdue any opposition that was captained by a girl.

Drowsiness came to him and mellowed some of those vague and uncomfortable feelings which had been irritating him. Mumble of men's voices on the little beach did not disturb him; the low monotone was rather soothing. Before he fell asleep the voices became less cautious.

"Everybody snoozing, I reckon."

"Yep. Plum full o' them Dago vittles."

"It must be cussed stuff when it takes us two hours to scour out these spiders and kittles. I'm a good mind to leave in some of this sand. Their blasted old gizzards must need it!"

"What kind of cheese was it the sport brought in that we guided on the Soubungo trip?"

"Edam, so he said!"

"Every time I look at Old He One it comes over me that I could pile up some of those cheeses and make something to look just like him in that rig he's wearing. Wonder if he has to do anything except eat."

"Probably not. They all have their money left to 'em, city critters like him. Couldn't earn a dollar for themselves."

Colonel Marthorn, financier, rolled over on his air mattress and growled.

"Outside of getting up more appetite by the doctor's orders, what's he up here for?"

"From what I've caught from time to time, it's to have 'em bring forth the royal diadem and crown him king of all."

There was a jangle of iron, as of spider thrown contemptuously into kettle. "You don't mean to say that he expects, or anybody expects for him, that he'll be anything like what John Kavanagh was in this section!"

"Some of those city snobs expect a whole lot before they have a chance to find out."

"Say, look here! Most funerals put a man away forever. Old X. K.'s funeral only made him more alive! Good Gawd! boy, except for the yelp of his cussing and the flat of his hand he's the living boss of this section to-day, and the Colleen Clare stands for all he was—no, all he is! She may never learn to cuss, but as for the flat of the Kavanagh hand—"

Colonel Marthorn rolled off his bed. The flat of the Kavanagh hand!

"Here you! You two on the beach! Off with you!"

Ironware rattled and two shadows went flitting.

When the colonel lay down again he remained wide-eyed for a long time.

He reached to his night stand for his bottle of sunburn cream; his cheek was smarting cruelly.

CHAPTER XVI

Noel the Bear continues his pilgrimage, striving to reconcile his doubts with his conscience, and takes another child by the hand.

NOEL THE BEAR found his Toban bark canoe in its hidden cache, crawled under the upturned shell, propped his head on a thwart, and slept, not minding the tingle in the night air.

In the morning he went on his way, paddling stolidly, his mouth full of the savor of parched corn and wild honey. He went without sound, not lifting the paddle's blade from the water. The river displayed to him its secrets as frankly as had the forest; a mink darted along the ledges, carrying a flapping fish for breakfast. In a logan, branching from the river, a buck fed on the roots of the lilies, thrusting his muzzle deep in the water, then lifting his head and munching without troubling to open his dripping eyes. A muskrat, with tail straight up like a sailless mast, swam in circles, searching for sweet grass, and a pair of foxes capered in a clearing, scampering about on the frosted sward in the pure joy of their sunrise playtime.

So he went on, making the carries, skirting the shores of the dead-waters.

In the course of time he came to Ste. Agathe and lifted

out above Tulandic. He trudged through the village, erect, his bark canoe like a shell on his back.

"Hoi, Noel! Going for beaver-tail?" hailed a man.

"Uh!" He did not pause.

"Better eat two this time."

"Get too young! Be big fool! Marry young squaw!"

The man who had hailed him was Tim Mulkern. The men who were on the tavern porch laughed. But Mulkern did not smile. He walked away toward his cottage.

"He got married so as to be happy and now he's the most miserable old pup in the whole valley. And Rosie isn't giving him one reason to be jealous," commented a gossip. "Think of a man like Tim Mulkern driving a spoolwood team so that he can stay in sight of his house all the time!"

"I reckon that Don Kezar is doing his best for the colleen, but she certainly does need a boss like Tim," declared another.

"She'll need him worse—him and his bag of canned thunder—next spring on the drive! The boys will get out and get under all right for Tim in the chopping-season, but it's for him and hell to get out and get under after the drive starts."

"The wife ought to have grit enough to make him go back to his real job."

A man crackled grim laughter. "Guess you don't know what Tim's brand of jealousy is like. My wife has found out from Rosie. The Colleen Clare asked Rosie to coax Tim to go to the woods and that's just what started Tim off on the rampage. He swore that Rosie wanted to get rid of him."

"If he has begun as soon as this to believe a lot of things

that ain't so, he'll get a peek at something some day that might be so—and in Mulkern's case it won't stop with a slap on the wrist."

Two men who had been adjusting their packs on the porch, and each of whom carried calipers, went off up the street.

"It's foolish business, doing so much loud gabbling in public," remonstrated the landlord of the tavern. "There go a couple of Temiscouata foresters. I'll bet they didn't lose any of that tip you gave 'em about Tim Mulkern, and they're likely to use it if he ever shows up at the head o' the drive."

"Oh, those calipering dudes don't know enough to understand man's talk," stated one of the gossips.

However, the foresters, marching on, being young men with their way to make in the good graces of the Temiscouata management, were canvassing the worth of that tip in case such a redoubtable man as Tim Mulkern came north in the spring to battle in the van of the X. K. bullies.

Noel the Bear set his canoe on end against the office of red brick.

He went in so quietly that Abner Kezar, bent over his ledger, did not hear the approach, and jumped on his stool when the old Indian grunted at the wicket.

"Cats ought to have hoofs and Indians ought to wear boots! I despise a cat!" squealed Kezar, with ire.

"Donald? Where?"

"None of your business."

"Donald? Where?"

"You heard what I said."

"Donald? Where?"

The grandfather showed yellow teeth and then snapped

them shut on a half-uttered oath. By dint of effort he showed more amiability, second thought influencing him. "Donald is in the woods. He is field boss for the X. K." That was authority stamping the news given out by Paul.

"When come home?"

"I don't know."

"When come home?"

"Noel, that's enough of that! I tell you the truth. I have no way of knowing when he'll come down-river. What do you want of him?"

"*Me tell him!*"

"Hold on, Noel! Wait a moment! I didn't mean to speak so sharp to you—but you scared me!" Then he revealed the reason for his forced amiability. "Miss Clare wants some wampum to send to a young lady. Bring some to me. I'll pay well."

"Me no peddler!"

"I know—I know! You're big chief. You have the wampum. Come, now! Sell some to me. I'm anxious to please Miss Clare."

Noel the Bear narrowed his eyes, as if calculating. "No sell! But swap!"

"Swap what?"

"Wampum for writing."

"I don't understand."

"When Donald come you write to me. Write to Lola Hébert, of the island farm, for me. She can read to me. I no read. You write. I'll bring wampum. Swap! No pay!"

Abner Kezar hesitated. The request was strange. He knew that old Noel held his wampum as a sacred heritage. This readiness to give so much for a mere letter was suspicious. Everlastingly his fears were ex-

exercised in behalf of his grandson. "I'll have to know why you want to see Donald," he declared, firmly.

"So! Well!" The eyes glowed deep in their sockets. "Once he give me something. Not much to him, much for me. I keep it. I have something to give him." He hesitated. "Marriage-present!"

"Eh? So you're guessing! It may be a good guess, Noel. Bless me, you have a soft spot under that rawhide of yours, after all! Do you want me to tell him?"

"No! Surprise!"

"You have hit me in a tender spot, Noel. I will write to you—to the Hébert girl. She's your—your—what?"

"Great-granddaughter."

"It's a trade! I'll hand a letter to the post rider. And about the wampum?"

"Me come this way! Bring it."

Kezar, from his window, watched the chief march on toward the river. The canoe covered him like a shell; the man of figures found that covering suggestive—he was not sure that he had penetrated the shell of Noel the Bear.

The old Indian paddled till late that night, and the harvest moon lighted his way. When he came to the island which made the farm of Onésime Hébert he found shelter in the little camp in the woods, the sanctuary of Lola's love. While he groped, seeking candle or lamp, his hand swept from the wall dried grasses and flowers, and after the room was lighted he observed that the flowers had been arranged in the form of letters; the fragments which remained revealed that fact to him, though he did not understand what any letters signified.

Though Noel was abroad early in the morning, Onésime Hébert was already in the fields; he came from among

his stooks of corn when the chief crossed that way. The farmer frowned when the Indian grunted a greeting.

"A word for you, *grandpère!* When you go to my house this time I'll have no more talk to Lola of her being this or that in the Mellicite tribe," he said, speaking in the patois of his broad, Norman French. "There has been too much of that folly. She is my daughter. She is not your princess!" He sneered the last word. "She shall marry and mind her ways in her home. A good French husband does not want a princess for his wife."

"She is *Royal Lis Blanc!* What you say no change what she is."

Hébert shook his head in anger; his gold ear-rings flashed in the sunlight. "It must be what you have said to her that makes her unhappy in her good home. There can be no other reason. She sighs and mourns and looks away at the hills. Yes, you have put the foolish notions in her head. She will not sit with Felix Bisson when he comes across the river from his fine farm to tell her that he will marry her. She would be thankful and proud if it were not for the silly pride you have put in her. She *shall* marry Felix Bisson."

The chief was silent.

"I have given my word to Felix Bisson," declared the father, his wrath mounting. "I get no sensible reason from her why she will not marry him, and so I must believe it's from the notions you have put into her head."

"Mebbe she no like him," ventured Noel.

"That's no good reason. She has said that. But it's no good reason when one has such a fine farm as Felix Bisson. I have given her to him. She shall go to his house even if I have to carry her there, like a cat in a sack."

"When you marry my granddaughter you know she have chief's blood in her."

"And she has good Acadian blood, too. It's time for Indians to stop being Indians."

"Be Quedaw, huh? Better be Canuck, huh? No! I'm Indian. Lola has chief's blood. I leave her the wampum belt, the staff and the feather and the fur."

"Go on your way with your folly! What is your tribe? Only a few Indians and half-breeds scattered around in the woods. They don't need any chief—not even you! If they must have a chief, you go and pick out a man."

But the old sachem turned his back and strode away, his action giving blunt declaration that he did not propose to allow Onésime Hébert to take any part in arranging the succession in the Mellicite tribe. The farmer followed on, muttering oaths. He angrily drove the point of his sickle into a tree and left the tool wagging there. He was on the chief's heels when Noel walked into the kitchen of the farm-house.

"You shall listen to no more of his folly," cried Hébert. "From now on you are my girl—just that! You have nothing to do with the tribe."

She hurried eagerly to meet Noel, not heeding her father's brusque command.

When she came to him, the chief pressed his palms to her temples for a moment, while she regarded him with mute inquiry. This was not the radiantly happy girl he had bound to Donald Kezar by the tribal oath of wedlock. Sudden color flamed in her cheeks when old Noel returned her gaze steadily—the color of hope, but it faded into pallor when she found only sympathy in his eyes.

"So! You're glad when you see him. You jump and

dance and run to him. You do not look at your good mother and me like that. You turn your eyes away from us most of the time," grumbled the father.

Noel, understanding better than the father why she had turned away her gaze, leaned and touched her forehead with his lips; he had never before bestowed on her any such token of affection; his caress was his tribute to her courage in her efforts to hide her woe and her secret from the folks of her home.

The girl and her mother had been at the breakfast-table when the chief entered; they had served the men of the family first, after the custom of the *habitant* women.

"Will you sit and eat?" asked Madame Hébert, anxiously eager to put an end to the dispute.

"No," replied the old Indian, directing meaning stare at Onésime.

"You're welcome to eat my food, as much as you like, Noel," protested the farmer. "But when you spoil my daughter for a good wife for Felix Bisson, then you're worse than a thief under this roof."

Not all the blood of the Mellicites was tamed in the mother. "Listen, Père Onésime! Noel is an honest man. He would tell our girl nothing except what is for her best good. I know what he has told her to be! I have heard him tell her to be proud, because a girl who thinks well of herself in an honest way makes others think well of her, too."

"If he expects good word from me, then he shall make her think well of Felix Bisson."

"When you had no big house here, when there were the trees instead of the fields, you told me that love is better than houses and money. So I came with you! What you said about love—it is so. I am not sorry.

But there was Felix Bisson's father who owned the big farm and had money! He found my face to his liking. That was before my work with you here brought the wrinkles. I turned my back on him. I came here with you. Eh, was it not so, though my father was bitter?" It was passionate outburst, in patois, but it did not prevail over the stubbornness of Onésime Hébert. Resentment because of his daughter's wilfulness had been gathering in him for weeks.

"I had the right to get you, if I could. So I talked to you about love. Maybe I do not take back anything that I said about it," he added, with peasant caution. "But where is the grand beau who comes to make my girl love him? She looks on no young man with kind face. She does not have excuse that she loves a fine man who will give to her what I have given to you!" He tossed his hands and made a gesture to indicate his possessions, and indicated by the cock of his head that he entertained no mean opinion of himself as a catch.

"There is plenty of time," said Madame Hébert, crisply.

"I say there is not time. Felix Bisson must have a woman to make his home good for him, now that his mother is old. He will not wait long on account of a girl's foolishness."

"This man who goes on so quick to look for another bargain because a girl does not leap at him at his first word—he is a fine lover!" scoffed the mother.

"I will not marry Felix Bisson," declared Lola. She was bulwarked by Noel, she was encouraged by the stand her mother had taken in the affair. Therefore she seized the opportunity and declared her defiance. "You may go and tell him that."

For a few moments there was silence in the big kitchen, while Onésime Hébert was silently whipping his wrath; the tufted hair over his eyes was made horrent by the twisting of his brows. He doubled his brown fists and set them on the table and propped himself on stiff arms.

"So! Now you will speak out! We shall know what mean the sighing and the crying and the looking off at the hills, as if the nice home is nothing and your *père* and *mère* are nothing, too! So! You are in love, eh?"

It was question-stab, sharp and sudden. Lola returned his stare, her lips parted.

He lifted one fist, drove down a blow which made the tableware dance and jangle, and roared, "Tell me!"

Her eyelids dropped slowly and she was silent with an air of sullen obstinacy.

"I have ears. I am not a fool. There is gossip on the border that you have been promised to Renegade Joel's Paul."

She opened her eyes full on him and they flashed fire. "*Mensonge!*" she cried and repeated the word shrilly and angrily. "It's a lie!"

"Then who is the grand beau? Have you one?"

Again her eyelids dropped.

"Do you have one you do not dare to bring to me and show?"

"Papa Onésime, you should not go about it that way to search into a good girl's heart," protested the mother. "She will come to me when it is good time—she will talk to me."

"Has she talked yet what mean all her queer ways?"

"All in good time; we shall know."

He mocked her placid reply. "But I shall know, now and here. For weeks I have been waiting. Is a father not

ready to give his girl good advice? What must a father think when his girl does not ask him? Who is hiding, making her sad? Why will she not marry Felix Bisson, if there's nobody else in the dark corner? I will know! Tell me, Lola!"

"I have nothing to tell!" But there was not the convincing sincerity with which she had denied the report about Paul Sabatis. The contrast in the tone of her replies put torch to the suspicions of the shrewd Acadian farmer.

"You confess there is somebody! If he is right for you, maybe you shall have him instead of taking Felix. Now tell!"

She shook her head.

"Then you slap the face of your good father who is ready to give you advice! Name o' God, I'll not have that! You're ashamed to show him to me, eh? That proves you need to be saved from him. I'm your father. I have given my word to Felix Bisson. He shall have you. By the holy Saint Christophe, I swear it!"

Old Noel had stood at one side of the room with folded arms. He stepped forward. "You must let her alone. She loves nobody. She has told me. She is waiting for right one!"

The girl understood; he was taking the lie on himself to save her from falsehood to her father.

"Why should she tell you and not tell me?" demanded the father, with jealous passion.

"I'm chief!"

"You're not chief in my house! It's for me to be that from now on!" He seized his daughter roughly by the arm, dragged her across the kitchen, and pushed her into

an inner room. When he had slammed the door he turned on Noel. "On with you and take your foolish talk with you. She is not a princess. She is my girl. She shall marry the man who can give her a big house, not a hut in the woods."

"Such talk as you make to her—it's more foolish than anything I have said. I warn you. You will do much hurt," protested old Noel, solemnly. "Again I say, let her wait. The right one will come."

"It has been your fault. You have put the ideas into her head. You have spoiled her." It was the father now framing in other words the same charge which had been voiced by Paul Sabatis, the lover.

Of a sudden the old chief's wrinkles seemed to be etched more deeply. Upon his natural gravity settled a shadow; it was an expression compounded of sorrow and groping doubt.

"So I tell you, go!"

"You are not a good Acadian to turn honest men hungry from your door," said the wife.

"He shall go. He may take bread with him. But he shall not eat under my roof!"

Old Noel swept his gaunt arm in wide, refusing gesture when she proffered the bowl heaped with loaves. "No! That his bread. Would be bitter. No want it. Too much bitter here!" He pressed his palm against his forehead. Then he started for the door. "Go think!" he muttered. "Much to think! Go think!"

He trudged slowly down across the broad field, his head bowed in meditation; in the camp in the woods he sat and continued his ponderings. While he gazed through the open door, Lola was suddenly framed there. She had come in haste; she was panting. Resolve, passion, des-

peration were animating her. "*Grandpère!* Take me! I am going! You must take me!"

His slow eyes left her face and he saw that she was garbed for a journey; a tassled bag of buckskin was secured on her hip by thongs which crossed her shoulders.

"I have run away! He went back to the field. *Mère* did not see! We must hurry before they know."

"No! Have been called thief. Too much been called thief! No!"

"But there is nobody to help me except you, *grandpère!* I must go away."

He wagged his head, refusing.

She rushed close to him, arms wide, palms outspread, her whole attitude making entreaty. To her mien she added the eager pleading of her voice, tears on her cheeks.

But he did not rise; he did not move muscle of his face or his body; again he stared through the open door upon vacancy.

Then fear whetted edge of anger on her grief and anxiety. "They will be coming. They will suspect. I say we must hurry." She beat upon his shoulder with the palms of her hands.

"Have done enough! No dare to do more!"

"If you don't do more, then what you have already done is wicked," she blazed. "You made me wife to him. You said it made me his wife. If that is so, where is my husband, *grandpère?*"

He puckered his wrinkled lids tightly over his eyes, set his teeth, and a twist of pain convulsed his features as if he had felt a dagger-thrust and were trying to hide his agony.

"You said that the oath would bind us two. I believed.

So you must take me to my husband. You must explain now to his *grandpère* so that my husband will no longer be afraid to come to me. That is all the trouble. He is afraid. But I am his wife. He will take me and love me and be with me when he is not afraid." She talked rapidly and eagerly, trying hard to fortify her faith and give explanation of Donald's acts to herself. "It is your duty, *grandpère*! Else what am I, if I don't have my husband?"

"I sit here—think much," he said after a time. "Only poor Indian. My word good—always good. Some men lie—not me. Only when I lie to help you."

She raised his hand and kissed it, thanking him without words.

"But a man—when his word was to you, Lola—I no think that he could lie. No! I not know just what is white man's law. He say to us he take Indian's law for his own."

"Yes, we are married. He said so. You told me so. It is my right to be with him. You must take me."

But he was struggling with his doubts and with the horror of a fear which had come upon him. Deep in his throat he made a queer sound, prolonging it like the moan of some animal in distress. Then his stoicism was overwhelmed by the agony which swept through him. His faith had been assailed not merely by some white man's say-so, but by the bitter accusation which Paul Sabatis had flung in his face—and Paul was an Indian who had been educated in the ways and the laws of the white man. The clack of finger in palm—Paul had said that the marriage amounted only to that! Noel the Bear writhed on the bench where he was seated and then slid to his knees on the floor. The girl stood back. She had

never seen her great-grandfather show any of the emotion which one might expect from other folks in time of stress. When he spoke it was with a broken squall which frightened her. His first words were uttered in the Mellicite tongue and she knew he was pleading in prayer to the God of his faith. "Mebbe wrong! Mebbe wrong!" he went on. "Only poor Indian. Not know. Try hard. Want to do right. But mebbe wrong! If what I do was wrong why can't all blame and trouble be on me? No! It's on my poor girl. Give me some more days of life! I go make right what is wrong!"

"*Grandpère! Grandpère!* Donald and I love each other. We begged you to marry us so that we could be happy while we were waiting for all to come right for us. I did not mean to blame you when I said what I did! But you must take me to him. I cannot stay at home any longer. I shall be a mad girl—shall be *caduc*—shall be crazy, for *père's* tongue will not stop. He will bring Felix Bisson. I have sworn to my husband I will not tell. But they will force me. I must not break my promise. Take me to him."

When the chief did not rise from his knees nor look at her she declared, with resolute passion that, in one of her nature, was convincing: "There is no one else who can help me. If you do not take me I'll go alone up and down the big river in my canoe until I find him. God hear me! I will not go back to my home."

She gazed about the little room with the piteous air of one bidding farewell to a sanctuary hallowed by memories. A part of the dried roses had been swept down from the wall by the groping hand of Noel. "They no longer say '*Je t'aime*,'" she murmured. "But I say it in my heart. He will say it to me when I have my arms about

him once more." Her lips quivered. "We do not need it on the wall. The lips shall say it. He did not come to see when the roses were red." She brushed down with careful hand the dried daisies, the lilies, and the other flowers which she had wreathed into the words of her affection, and the old Indian, rising from his knees, watched her in silence. He understood with the poignancy of an instinctive understanding, and tears sparkled in his deep eyes. When she turned to him he put out his hand to her.

"Lola, come! What they say—what they do to me! No care now." Once more he pressed palm to his forehead. "Something here tell me I'm fool—only poor Indian. But something here"—he tapped finger on his breast—"tell me I try to do right!"

"It is right to help me, for I'm only a poor girl!"

"Me don't understand—not very much!" he mourned, his palm on his brow, his other hand on his heart, suffering through that conflict which is eternal—the struggle in which the forces of love are fighting against reason. "But come! We go."

Hand in hand, the child of one hundred and two years, the child of seventeen years, they went forth seeking. Old Noel set his canoe on the river's brimming flood; they took their places and paddled down the current, holding close to the shore so that the eyes of the Isle of Hébert should not spy them.

When they were on their way he explained to her his pact with Abner Kazar. With the accuracy of one who had watched anxiously and jealously the hour of the post rider's coming, she told Noel the time when they would be likely to intercept the man on the Long Highway. So, at a hidden spot on the shore at midday, they waited

and had their instructions for the rider when he came, trotting his little white horse.

"The letter for me—when it comes from Sainte Agathe," she told the man who had so often smiled on her joy when he dropped letters into her hand at the spot where the bar of iron hung as the ferry signal, "you carry it on down the river and leave it at the home of Mitch Polysusep and there I will find it. And you will not tell my *père* what I say or that you have seen me, eh?"

It was wistful pleading and her dark eyes, filled with tears, were upraised and her face was close to his. He bent closer. He was a dried and wrinkled old Acadian.

"For the pay of the extra postage—if there is any—" she went on, and then hesitated—and then she was silent, perforce, because he kissed her red lips.

"It is paid—paid so very much more than it will ever cost, *jolie* Mam'selle Hébert!" he cried, gallantly, and went on laughing, his cap in his hand.

"So, you shall know!" said the chief, consolingly, when they were in the canoe again. "The letter will come. Then we go to find him. Now think good thoughts all the time. Keep tears away. Put back roses on cheeks. He shall love you when he see you. Happy times will come."

It was a day full of the glory of autumn, without breath of breeze.

They paddled on, their thoughts keeping speech from their lips.

The chief set ashore at the place which had been Old Joel's. The windows were shuttered and spiders had sealed the closed doors with webs.

"Me see Paul Sabatis. At Hulling Machine have talk," he told her. He regarded her with keen gaze.

"He's a traitor, *grandpère*," she cried, with sudden fury. "He promised to help me. But he told lies to hurt me. He told them here in this place to the drunken men, and those lies have gone up and down the border. He does not dare to meet me face to face again."

"He has gone north—to the deep woods. You will not see him." Beyond that Noel did not comment. It was not his nature to gossip; he did not deal in speculations by the spoken word.

"My husband will believe me," she declared, proudly.

The chief pointed over the trees to a thin spire of smoke thrusting straight up against the blue of the sky. It was the signal summoning the Mellicites to the Feast of the Maize. "We go that way—to Telos."

"But the letter!" she pleaded, anxiously.

"The letter will come where we may go. It's for the *Royal Lis Blanc*! Same as chief. Me take you to Telos. You shall hear my word to the tribe. You take the great oath. I give to you the staff, the wampum, and the feather and the fur."

But the princess, on her way to her coronation, stopped at the edge of the woods and gazed back at the river with regret and longing. It was the avenue along which she wished to journey; it would lead her to the man she loved. To be proclaimed his wife before the world was the one dear honor for which she yearned. The promised promulgation that she was to be respected as the head of the Mellicites weighed as only a trifle beside that other promise. New hope rose in her: he would take her to himself now that she had no home except that which he could give her.

CHAPTER XVII

The foe within the Kavanagh walls adds to his other errors the mistake of kicking a cat.

DONALD KEZAR was distinctly far from affable when he dealt with men who came seeking Clare Kavanagh in the north country. To such extent as he could stretch his authority as field boss, he set himself up as a barrier; he assumed the rôle of her personal guardian. It was crude, tactless, and persistent effort to make himself master of her affairs. From her, as much as was possible, he concealed that effort.

Therefore, gradually, there was a growing misunderstanding in the Toban in regard to Clare's attitude toward the men of the X. K. Daily the field boss applied his methods of insulation; men who failed in their efforts to see her and talk their business over with her went away humbled or hurt, angry or suspicious. John Kavanagh, in the outbursts of his bluff tyranny, had been with them and of them. But this daughter, with her education and in her fresh elevation to supreme power, seemed to be dispensing with the compelling quality of personality. Personality had fed the fires of loyalty in the X. K. machine while Kavanagh was alive. Kezar, assiduously dulling points of contact, was wrecking that machine more certainly than any outside enemy influence could prevail against it.

The obsession of the Kavanagh puissance still remained with the men of the ranks and, in the changed condition of affairs, injured rather than helped; she seemed to be haughtily delegating those powers in desire to remain aloof. The simple-hearted followers accepted the situation as it looked from the outside; they were dull analysts. Even in her presence they were ill at ease, apologetic, self-conscious, like men who acted under protest.

Clare was a keen observer, so far as she was permitted to see; but she did not understand in this instance; it became her conviction that men were unwilling to do business with a girl.

However, her heritage and the task to which she had set herself filled her with high resolve and with the joy of toil.

She was not animated merely by sense of loyalty to her father's memory, by her implied promise to him that she would carry on that to which he had given his life. She had determined to keep intact the X. K., the monument of John Kavanagh's efforts and sacrifices, but she knew that her own ambition of achievement was actuating her as well as her promise.

She stepped out of the headquarters camp and stood in the sunrise and breathed deeply the frosted air. It was good to be there—to know that she was giving deserving men the opportunity to toil for their families. Even though doubts as to her efficiency would be sure to assail her before the close of day, she always awoke with a sense of gratitude and determination to succeed.

Before her eyes were visible and heartening evidences of what John Kavanagh's efforts had won from the forest for her endowment.

The X. K. depot-camp, field headquarters from which

tote-roads and water avenues led to the various operations, was on the Sickie-hook, the thoroughfare which connected the Twin Ebeemahs, lakes from which the blackgrowth slopes stretched far to the ledges of the Saskis range. Clare looked down on the still waters of the Sickie-hook and saw her flotilla of bateaux, the warp gondolas, the supply-scow, and the boom-tenders' house-boats. Between her and the thoroughfare straggled the hamlet of log houses—the broad hovels where the big, slow woods horses munched their oats and nuzzled in the racks of hay; in the silence she could hear them. Under the roofs of cedar splints—coverings carefully matched against the rain and the snow, she knew that bounty was heaped—tiered casks of pork, barrels of flour, sacks, cases, kegs, and the *olla podrida* of lumber-camp needs. There were mounds where barrels of kerosene were buried to guard against evaporation. Baled hay, piled high and covered with canvas, low structures of corrugated iron which protected grain and feed from the mice, bunk-houses, cook-camps—the village crowded the slope.

While she stood there in the sunrise, a gasoline-engine began to bark and there was sound of iron grinding against stone—the tool-sharpeners were at work. A crew for a new operation on the far Whirlingstone had been fed and were starting away, dunnage-sacks across their shoulders, each man with an ax in his hand. Five months of wilderness ahead of them! They waved their axes, pulled off their caps, and cheered her. There were almost one hundred men in that crew; a half-dozen such crews were in the woods ahead of them. She felt a thrill of honest pride, and memory of something her father had told her brought moisture into her eyes.

He had tramped those untracked forests, exploring for

timber, eating his pork raw so as to get all the good out of it, sleeping uncovered with his back against a tree. The thought of his sacrifices armed her resolve to succeed; the spectacle of her possessions outspread there in the morning light was urge for her ambition, but the memory of how John Kavanagh had earned what he left to her fortified her with more earnest determination than mere ambition could give.

Dumphy trudged past her with his pail of fresh water, as meek a slave in the service of Elisiane Sirois at the field-camp as he had been at the mansion at Ste. Agathe. Ever since Clare's outburst one day in her little comedy on the porch with her father, Dumphy had slid apprehensive side-glance at the girl o' mornings, as if he wanted to make sure of the mood in which she had risen.

At that moment Clare was observing another little drama at the foot of the slope, near the thoroughfare. Donald Kezar had suddenly snatched something from a man with whom he had been talking; the man had newly arrived in a canoe. They were too far away for their words to be heard by her.

"Dumphy!" She did not turn her gaze from the men at the shore. Kezar snapped his fingers insolently under the man's nose and turned away.

"Yes'm!"

"Did you notice that man with Donald when you came past? Who is he?"

"His tongue was saying that he's a messenger to you from Temiscouata Marthorn—but it's little I believe from any tongue in that gang."

She waited for a few moments; the man went away in his canoe, but Kezar did not come to her or appear to

know that she was looking on. He went off toward the wangan-camp.

She walked across the slope and intercepted him. His hands were empty.

"Have you a message for me—did that man bring one?"

"It's only a little business—nothing worth your bothering with."

"What business?"

He was not ready to confess to her that he was taking a letter to some safe place where he could steam the flap of the envelope.

The unreadiness to confess, coupled with the danger in trying to explain at that moment what the business was, caused him to hesitate.

"I saw you take something from the man. If it's a letter, give it to me."

"I know how you feel toward the Temiscouata bunch and I thought I would save you all bother," he explained, not at all sure of his tone or his features. He made no move to produce the letter.

She put out her hand.

"Clare, it's best for me to 'tend to all these rows. I know how to fight 'em."

She stared at him, frankly amazed. "Donald, do you presume enough to intercept messages addressed to me?"

"I didn't mean it like that. But I didn't think you'd want to have any truck with anybody by the name of Marthorn, so I—"

"Not another word! That message!" He placed a letter in her hand. It was addressed to her and bore the name of Stephen Marthorn as sender.

"You see, I knew it was from him, for his name is on it.

And I thought to myself I'd save you from being stirred up and—"

"Did that messenger tell you what the business might be?" she demanded!

"No! No-o! But—"

"The letter is sealed! Therefore you admit you know nothing about the matter. Have I appointed you either my guardian or my secretary?"

He shook his head and lowered his gaze.

He looked up in a few moments, for she was silent, and he found her eyes fixed on him in most uncomfortable fashion. It was stare appraising, rebuking, incredulous, resentful.

"Oh, Clare! There's such a thing as trying to help too much. I'm it! I try so hard to help. I do the best I know. I haven't had education like some folks have. I make mistakes, but my heart is right. Forgive me, but I want to lift every load from you!"

There was real contrition in his whine.

"You are old enough to know the difference between helping and meddling, Donald. I am not trying to shift any of my responsibilities."

"I wish I could have all of 'em to carry," he blurted. "I have hinted before—now I wish you'd let me tell you, Clare. I'll lie down and you can walk on me. I'll be your—"

"Donald! Donald!" Her tone was sharp, but she gave him a rather tolerant smile, though there was a twist of the Kavanagh grimness in it. "Do you think this is a happy moment for that threatened proposal of yours? I most certainly do not. Again I beg you to defer it!"

"But you keep joking with me, Clare, about it. I don't get anywhere. You know how much I love you.

Give me one word that will make me hope for something. I'll die if you don't."

"I should hate to believe that the state of your health is so precarious. I need a healthy field boss. Now, Don, hold on! I am not a coquette. I abhor that sort. To be told continually that I am this and that, and that you're dying of love, nauseates me. I like you. There's my hand on it. I forgive a great deal in you because I know you're doing it because you're eager to help me. But just now I am having my first taste of independence. It's wonderful. Look!" She swung her arm in a gesture, true daughter of her father. "It's all mine, Don. I wouldn't be talking so to anybody else, but you're my best friend, my true, good, understanding friend—and how sweet it is to brag to our friends!" Her eyes danced and all the glory of ardent life was in her. "I'm going to run it! All by myself! I want to show 'em that I'm John Kavanagh's own girl. If I can't run it, then I'll have to hide away and be a wife and knit and sew. But now, glory be, I'm running it!" It was almost shout of exultation.

She waved the letter above her head. "From Stephen Marthorn to Clare Kavanagh! The president of the Temiscouata to the head of the X. K."

She moderated her tone a bit and looked around her half-guiltily. "I think I'm silly," she confessed. "But it's allowable to be silly once in a while in the presence of one's best and truest friend. It's a rest from responsibility." Her eyes, when he looked into them, were tender and he flushed happily. "But not too much love now, Don! I mustn't have a husband either bossing me or under my feet. It's time for a husband when I don't make good on my own hook." The repetition of

that statement sounded like promulgation of the terms on which she would accept a husband. To Kezar, versed in only one kind of love-making and finding that method unavailing in the case of Clare Kavanagh, her statement was like a challenge to his desire and his cupidity.

"And now we shall see what writes the great colonel." She stripped the envelope from the missive. She frowned while she read, though it was invitation courteously couched. He stated his earnest desire to have a talk with her on matters of importance and said that it had been his purpose to come to her, but he was finding the fatigues of his journey considerable and feared he would not be able to venture farther into the wilderness. He apologized, pleading the infirmities of age. He asked her to be his guest at Sebomuk Farm, the Temiscouata's lower grand depot on the dead-water. He added that his daughter was in his party and would be greatly pleased to meet again her schoolmate.

"A trick that's very transparent," commented Miss Kavanagh, savagely. "Asks me to come down to Sebomuk, Donald, so that he can make me feel little and helpless, browbeating me on his own ground."

"That's fine nerve! A man asking a lady to do the running. You won't go!"

"What's that?" Her eyes narrowed.

"I meant to say that you probably haven't any notion of rushing down there at the beck and call of old Marthorn."

"I shall do exactly as my father would have done, Donald. This isn't a matter of man or woman or social forms." She tapped the letter. "It's the business of the X. K. and I am at the head of that business. Colonel Marthorn has come up here when he found that his

errand-boys couldn't have their way with me. If my father wanted a final understanding with any man in authority he went to that man when the man couldn't come to him."

She started back toward her camp.

Donald followed. "Why don't you let me go down there and do the talking?" he urged. "I know what needs to be said. You have told me that you will not sell your lands or your stumpage or join drives. I can tell him that the X. K. proposes to stay independent."

"No doubt you can," she admitted. "I'll delegate you to say it to all of his understrappers, after this. But now it's between headquarters, Donald, my friend!" Her tone was caustic.

He stopped and allowed her to go on alone. From his viewpoint her pride in her independence was girlish folly, and her assumption of authority, even though the interests concerned were wholly hers, made him angry. He was not able to feel respect for her in the rôle she had adopted; it seemed like a child playing with the tools of grown-ups, and sharp-edged tools at that! He looked after her and cursed roundly and reaffirmed his determination to make her "almighty sick of her job."

Tom Kilbeck, custodian of the provender storehouse, came past, leading his cats to their breakfast in the dingle. There were a dozen or more, Tom's dearly beloved assistants in the work of keeping mouse marauders away from the grain-sacks. In his arms he carried little kittens, a nestling mass of fur from which stuck funny spindles of tails. A sociable cat arched her back and rubbed against Kezar's woods-boot. He kicked away the astonished animal.

"Ut's har-r-dly richt, thot, sir," remonstrated Tom

Kilbeck. "Manny an oat-bag has been saved for the X. K., and she's the mither of the wee wallopies I'm bearing in me ar-rms—and they'll save manny more oat-bags."

"I hate a cat."

"I've hear-rd your grandsire say thot! And of an Indian he says it, too!"

The big Scotchman was giving Donald disconcerting stare. "Is it because you don't dislike Indians that ye put so much uxtry power-r in your kick of a puss?"

"I never have said I like Indians."

"Ut's a Hieland saying that while one may be whuspering the wor-rd, the act may be blowing the trumpet-blast."

"Curse your impudence! Do you dare to stand there and tell me that I have anything to do with Indians?"

"There's anither saying—ut's from the Lowlands—thot anny man in too much haste to grab up breeks thot fit him may find a thustle in 'em when he sits doon."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Kilbeck, but I can see that you're looking for trouble. If you give me any more lip I'll discharge you."

"I'll be obligated to you if you do. For it will give me an excuse for a wee bit of a chat with the Lass o' the Lofty Place. Here's one your ar-rm and your tongue kinna stay frae her; 'twould be my duty to tell her why I'm leaving my kitties and the job."

Kezar hedged.

"Overlook it, if I spoke out too quickly, Tom. But lying scandal and the hint of it make me mad. I know you wouldn't hurt me by repeating any lies."

"I'm not much of a gossip. But I'm a frank man who likes to be well understood. After this you'd best play a sporting game and kick something thot has feet as har-rd

as your ain—so thot ut may kick back if ut so minds. If I see you kick anither ane of my pussy-cat friends, here, ut's my firm conviction thot I'll be able to remember-r more"—he hesitated—"more proverbs."

He dwelt on the word significantly and stalked away, leaving the field boss to wonder just how much danger there was behind the hints of Tom Kilbeck. Kezar did not hope that all of the border gossip could be kept from the ears of Clare. Already she had teased him a bit, in comradely fashion, about stories of his flirtations, but it was evident from her manner that she construed all such affairs as the innocent diversions of youth. By sobriety and constant attendance on her he was showing that since she had come back into his life he had put all his past follies away from him. He did not remember that she had definitely assured him in regard to her opinions on a man's past, but, somehow, perhaps indirectly, he felt quite sure that she had given him to understand that loyalty for the present and faith in the future were the twin touchstones by which she tried the nature of one's affection.

He had resolved to class Lola Hébert with his follies and to put her definitely behind him. After reflection, he felt safe; her fear of her parents, timid regard for her reputation, would close her mouth, he was certain. Knowing her nature, he reckoned that after so many weeks her sorrow had been changed to anger and that her pride would forbid her to seek him. In the case of Lola the young man's selfishness prevailed over his curiosity. He did not want to have his feelings disturbed by reproaches or pleadings. Therefore, when a letter from the deserted girl came to him he did not open it; he tore it up unread. From her silence in the past few weeks he drew auguries

that were favorable to his hopes; the girl had come to herself and had given him up! He had nothing to fear. Nevertheless, the Scotchman's grim satire had scared the lover of Clare.

Donald went to the wangan-store and secured several cans of tinned salmon. He carried them to the dingle where the cats were feeding on kitchen scraps. "I guess the treat's on me, Tom! I hope the old gray tabby has no hard feelings."

"Ut wasna the gray one—ut was the brindle—and that shows that ye was absent-minded when ye let fly your fut. So, if that's the case, we'll let ut rest, with thanks of all of us for the bit fishie."

The big Scotchman paused after he had jabbed the blade of his knife into a can and he scowled after Donald from under thick eyebrows. "I was pretty drunk when I snoozed behind the ledge on Deadman's Strip," he muttered, "and I wasna so sure thot I heard the Indians richt. But the coward has gi'en me the truth of ut, along wi' his sammun." The cats had sniffed the welcome rarity and were clawing at his trousers legs. "What to do wi' ut, I dinna yet mind me. Leave clawing and gouging, ye tykes! Ay, I think I'll leave my old tongue off the lassie doon the river. I'll give the auld clawing gossip-cats no scent to follow! Agh! Ye renegade! Ye rat! But we'll have an eye on ye if ye try to gnaw your way to the X. K.'s best treasure! Eh, auld mousers, what?"

CHAPTER XVIII

A meeting at Holeb Eddy which seemed to promise much and a combination at Dolan's House which seemed to promise more.

CLARE KAVANAGH did not journey to her meeting with Colonel Marthorn in the spirit of a guest, for she had determined that she would not be beholden to him for any of his hospitality. Therefore she equipped an expedition in a modest way, carrying food and shelter for her party. Eublas Pratt and Walt Niles manned her canoe; to Dumphy and Donald Kezar she confided Elsie. Divided among other canoes was the camping outfit.

Kezar had sulked when she chose Pratt and Niles for her companions, and he seized an opportunity and ventured to protest. They were veteran timber-cruisers who had been long in the service of the X. K.

"No more of such nonsense, Donald!" she said, rebuking him in sharp tone. "This is a business trip, not a pleasure excursion. I have matters to talk over with my explorers."

Ugly rebelliousness burned in him almost as hotly as the passion he felt for her. Daily she seemed to be growing more self-assured, more patronizing in his case.

Somehow, that day, she seemed more inaccessible than usual. Her high boots, her short skirt, her reefer jacket,

her slouch-hat were masculine rather than feminine. Her speech had the Kavanagh snap in it. 'Twas plain that she was going to her interview with Temiscouata Marthorn in no spirit of bland sociability. The moment the canoe was shoved off she began brisk questioning of the explorers in regard to the stand of spruce on Nadeau Ridge where the new camps had been built. Her field boss gnawed his lip. More than ever that self-sufficiency in a girl stirred in him rancor rather than respect.

He took the bow paddle and kept his face turned steadily to the front, away from Dumphy's scrutiny, while he canvassed projects which might bring the girl close enough to ruin to serve his selfish ends.

Here and there on the river Clare's flotilla met other canoes and the men raised paddles in respectful salute.

At Red Heath splash dam were two men who were lifting their canoe over the short carry. She knew them as stumpage-buyers who had dealt with her father.

"I'm sorry to trouble you, Miss Kavanagh, but perhaps you can give me the time while they are taking your canoes over," said one of the men, with apology in tone and manner. "It's about the contract."

"I have plenty of time for any business of the X. K."

"I'm glad you're so polite. But Mr. Kezar said you didn't want to be bothered by men like us running to you all the time and—"

"Mr. Kezar must have misunderstood. I am anxious to deal directly and personally with all."

The men looked at each other and then the spokesman explained that the contract which had been drawn up by Kezar enforced payment at an awkward time; it was a case of spool-wood stumpage and the mills demanded seasoned birch in order to reduce freight charges. "We'll

have to borrow the money to pay you, Miss Kavanagh, if we can't wait till the birch dries out."

"Did Mr. Kezar understand about it?"

"We told him. But he insisted."

Clare hesitated, setting her teeth, the red line of her lips straight and narrow. But she controlled herself. "Nevertheless, he couldn't have understood all about it. He would not want to put the X. K. in any such light. You need not make any payments to me until the mills have paid you." She took a note-book from her pocket, wrote rapidly, and gave the leaf to the man. "There's my O. K."

They thanked her gratefully and went on.

She hastened to the landing-place below the dam and called Donald aside. "I have just saved your face in a matter. Why do you tell men that I do not want to be bothered by business?"

"You are paying me a good salary, Clare! I thought I was expected to attend to details."

"But you are not to misrepresent me or the X. K. policy. You forced on those spool-wood men a contract they couldn't carry out without pinching themselves. I have extended the time of payment, but I saved your face, I say. I told them 'twas a mistake. After this, Donald, don't let your zeal in my affairs lead you too far."

"And where do orders like that leave me? I'm your field boss. How far is too far?" he demanded, stiffly.

"I do not propose to say, Donald! If you haven't enough of man's good sense and discretion to know for yourself what is the right way to be my real helper, you are very unfortunate. I can assure you that much! I know that you are honest and mean the best ever!

I depend on you! Now show me that you know how to act wisely. And do not feel called upon to do any lying for me. The Kavanaghs have always handled that for themselves in their own way!"

She took her seat in her canoe and continued her talk with the explorers.

Kezar felt that his patience would not endure any more wrenches that day, but a more severe trial was ahead of him.

For generations the clearing at Holeb Eddy has been rest-ground for the voyagers on the Toban. There are a number of splint floors ready for tents, there are many little cairns of stones, smoke-blackened by the cook-fires. The Kavanagh party halted there for lunch. Kezar was tempted to keep straight on, for, before he landed, he saw Paul Sabatis on his knees, tending his bit of fire.

Save to rise and tender to Clare a courteous bow, the Indian seemed to pay little heed to his new neighbors. He brewed his tea and frizzled his bacon. Before the lunch had been spread for the X. K. folks Paul had cleaned his skillet and his tea-pail and had tied up his pack. Kezar, stealing impatient and apprehensive side-glances, stayed close to the cook-fire, pretending to give it all of his attention, breaking dry twigs and feeding fagots. His anxious thoughts urged Sabatis to be on his way. It was the nerve-racking anxiety of impotent debtor in the presence of creditor. Sabatis had threatened to collect a debt. Would he choose this place or time? Donald was with his own, had men to protect him, and the reflection heartened him in the belief that Sabatis would make no attempt to settle a grudge. On the other hand, in the presence of Clare Kavanagh the

Indian's tongue would be a more terrible weapon than a rifle.

Sabatis filled his pipe and smoked placidly. It was plain to Kezar that the Indian was waiting. The thought that this ominous waiting portended intention to deal with the matter that lay between them was terrifying, for Kezar's conscience was raw. The Indian's calm, bodeful demeanor, his care not to look at Kezar, made the situation all the more trying; the very uncertainty of it crucified the young man's feelings. He felt like jumping up and shouting to Sabatis to come on, to say what he had to say, to have it over with. But only when the lunch had been eaten and when the men began to pack up the utensils and set the covers on the wooden firkins did Paul show interest in Kezar.

The Indian rose and stood with folded arms. "I have a matter for your ears, Mr. Kezar. Will you please walk aside with me?" He stood at some distance from the party and spoke so that all heard.

"I haven't time to spare to-day, Sabatis! We're in a hurry!"

"The matter requires only a few moments, Mr. Kezar."

"You heard what I said." He was pale and his hands trembled when he undertook to busy himself with some of the camp kit.

Clare was frankly surprised. "We can attend to all of this, Donald. Why do you answer the young man so rudely?"

"I don't need any advice about how to attend to my own business," he blurted, his fears making his temper short; he was not in a mood to endure more that day.

"And now you are rude to *me*! What is the matter with you?"

"I am not wasting your time, Mr. Kezar," stated Paul. "You are wasting it."

"I am in no frame of mind to talk business with anybody to-day. You'll have to see me at some other time."

"I am going far and may not come this way soon. I ask you to step aside—*now!*"

The men of the party had stopped all activity and were surveying their field boss with wonderment.

"Yes, you are wasting the time of all of us," declared Miss Clare, with impatience in manner and voice. "Donald, mind your manners!" It was said with the imperiousness of John Kavanagh himself.

When Kezar finally walked toward Sabatis he went slowly and, with instinctive movement of reassurance, he set his palm for a moment against his hip.

The Indian smiled contemptuously. "I said it was a matter for your *ears*," he reminded the boss. "I did not mean that I proposed to box them."

Explorer Pratt giggled.

Paul's smile and his bit of a jest relieved the tension considerably. Clare smiled, though it was clear that her curiosity was in no manner satisfied.

"I didn't think there are any men still afraid of Injuns and of bows and arrows in the woods," commented Mr. Dumphy. "I wish I knew how to give a war-whoop. I'd like to make him jump."

"Hush your jokes, Dumphy," commanded the mistress.

Paul spoke in a low tone when Kezar came near. "I'll not take you out of the sight of your friends, you coward. This is not the time or the place for the matter which lies between us two. Come! Twenty paces from their ears." He led the way. "There's only one thing

that's protecting you from me, Kezar. A girl thinks you are worth something to her. You must prove to her that you are worth something."

"What do you mean?"

"She believes that you are her husband. So far as I am concerned, that is your only excuse for living. Do you understand?"

"No."

"That's because you don't want to understand! I don't ask any word of promise from you. Your word is worth nothing. But as long as you are Lola's husband, and she remains satisfied with you, I'll keep my hands off you. Your safety rests with you. If you abandon her you will be worth nothing to her. Then look out for me!"

"You are meddling in an affair that's none of your business."

"Yes! I am honest! It's none of my business. But I mean what I threaten. I'm trying to do by my threats what honor and decency and your promise can never make you do."

"I haven't done anything that will excuse you for killing me, if that's what you threaten! Those two old men—"

"I am not talking about those old men. I'll give you what's excuse enough for me if I kill you." His voice was tense and grating. There seemed to be red flames in his eyes. "You have made a plaything of a girl I have loved since we were children. I love her now in spite of everything." He drew a long breath. "There, Kezar! I have just done the hardest thing I was ever called on to do. But it's out. It's the truth! You, you sneaking hound, I don't believe you have man-

decency enough in you to realize what it has meant to me to stand in front of you here and confess what I have just owned up to. I have laid down all of my pride for you to spit on! But I have done the hard thing so that I can show you how I'll be ready to do the easy thing—kill you! I have told you how you can stay alive." He hurried abruptly from Kezar; the latter stood where he had been left until Paul had pushed off his canoe and was paddling up-river.

Donald was fully aware that the contretemps demanded some sort of comment from him; he got his feelings and his features under control and rejoined his party: "It's the aftermath of the affair at Old Joel's. You remember that I explained it all to your father, Miss Kavanagh." He was usually formal with her in the hearing of others.

"I remember that he was not pleased because you were mixed up in anything of the sort."

"But I was not mixed up in it! The crazy old half-breed grabbed my horse away from me and raced up the road on it. That Indian thinks I loaned the horse to his uncle and wants to quarrel. But he's a cheap scallawag—always lying and trying to start trouble. Nobody pays any attention to what he says or does!"

Eublas Pratt sturdily offered protest. "Leetle strong—leetle strong—that language, Mr. Kezar! I have known the boy a long time. Never saw yaller in him."

"Well, when a man calls me aside and threatens that he's going to kill me some day, he has developed a streak that's either yellow or red or some color that isn't right."

"What's that you say? Kill you?" demanded Pratt, incredulously.

"That's what I said. That's what he threatened to

do. If anything happens to him in these woods after this, you can all swear that I was acting in self-defense." They surveyed him with considerable wonderment, for his sudden anger was almost hysteria. "A man has the right to protect himself against a crazy Indian. If I should drop him like I'd drop a *loup-cervier* the law would have to stand behind me. You saw how he called me over there to threaten me."

Explorer Pratt shook his head. "Calm down!" he advised. "We heard no threats. You'd better keep away from any mix-up with Sabatis. We'd be poor witnesses if you should depend on us to bring you off. College Indians in these days don't go round trying to scalp folks; and white men better not do any ambushing."

"That advice is excellent," declared the head of the X. K., starting for her canoe. "You must be having a case of nerves, Don! I have always heard Paul Sabatis spoken of as a rather mild young man. And somebody has told me—I can't remember who—that he is soon to marry a very handsome girl."

"It's the girl Lola, of the Isle of Hébert, marm," reported Explorer Niles. "The Mellicites call her The White Lily. I've seen her. She's a hummer for looks—present company, of course, excepted."

"Then we may safely hope that the wild young Indian will be thoroughly domesticated in a very short time and will not be roaming the woods, waving a tomahawk and crying for the blood of nervous young field bosses." From her seat in the canoe she gave the flushed Donald a side-glance that was demurely humorous; but the look quieted him somewhat, for it expressed tolerant sympathy and friendly expression of an intimacy close enough to allow jesting on a rather delicate matter. "We may be

able to arrange it, Donald, so that you may be his best man at the wedding instead of his worst foe on the war-path. At all events, be sufficiently modern to send him a nice wedding-present. And the handsome girl! I believe I'll disregard convenances and send a present to *her*. It may help the general effect in the peace-work. Her name is—what did you say, Mr. Niles?”

“It's Lola Hébert. Her father is Onésime Hébert, the owner of the big island half-way down to the Portage Beauheu—and she'll match up well with Paul because she has Mellicite blood—she's kin of old Noel the Bear.”

The gossipy Mr. Niles had the stern paddle and was pushing off.

Clare was able to flash one last radiant smile at Donald and then made a little *moue* of disappointment, suggestion for him alone. ‘Oh, she's only an Indian,” she returned, looking at Mr. Niles, and adding, for the ears of Donald, discomposed by her jests, “Then I'm afraid, after all, that it's not because of a threat of the young Lochinvar to ride out of the west!”

Mr. Niles, having no personal acquaintance with the young man mentioned, and cautious about commenting on remarks which he did not understand, kept silent and paddled away. Donald, following after, felt like a canoeeman who had just negotiated safely a stretch of white water in which bristled dangerous ledges. He was uneasy! Only the threat of Paul had produced any effect on Kezar; nobody knew just what an ugly Indian might do. Donald had no sympathy for the poor boy's love and distress, and the effort Paul had made to straighten the affairs of Lola—an effort which by its very crudity might have touched the heart of a less selfish man—roused only anger in Kezar. He felt that

the Indian might have sized him up as being a fool; he saw no pathos in Paul's striving to make use of the one method left to him, a method which branded the repulsed lover as the real fool in matters of the heart. , Abroad, against the suitor who craved Clare Kavanagh, were tongue and rifle, jealousy and desperation; he wondered what aids he could enlist. At Dolan's House—at the Squawpan—where they lodged that night, he found one. It was Jesse Wallin, game warden, brother of Tom, and another chum who had tested the attractions of the border barrooms and brothels in Kezar's company.

Mr. Wallin, who arrived at Dolan's House in a canoe ballasted with a case of gin in high-shouldered bottles, walked, after supper, with Donald and talked with him freely. At the time of the walk and the talk Mr. Wallin's stock of gin had been depleted by one bottle which had been full when he had arrived at Dolan's House, and he was very profuse and volubly profane in his declarations of what he proposed to do, eventually, in the case of a certain double-starred, much-beblanked, book-ballasted Indian he was following up—to wit, Paul Sabatis.

Mr. Wallin, as game warden and special spy for certain associated timber barons, had been tipped off from down-river headquarters that Sabatis had been consulting with lawyers and was going into the woods to make a test case of the various treaty rights of the Indians.

Mr. Kezar, wishing all the best for a friend of long standing, devoutly hoped, so he said, that the friend would not take any chances with a red devil like Sabatis. It was Mr. Kezar's firm conviction that Mr. Wallin should shoot the Indian on sight.

But Mr. Wallin, in the mood he was in, demurred. A thing planned that way was too quickly over with. "The idea is this," stated Mr. Wallin, following up the topic of certain prisoners whom he had caused to be convicted and committed, "I have been using some brains in my line the same as anybody has got to use brains in these times. One of the first chaps I ever chased in the woods winged me in the arm. But I got him. Didn't hurt him. He's still in state prison. Assault with intent to kill an officer. I had a soft time in a hoss-pittle, with a pretty girl to wait and tend and I got double pay and a bonus. See? Well, when I wanted another soft thing, I caught a cheap snoozer and I shot my own self in the foot. Three months' vacation and all the trimmings! And so on! I know how to plant a bullet in me so that it don't hurt none to speak of! I ain't going to waste that Indian by shooting him down like you advise. It hasn't ever made any difference what the other critters have said in court about not shooting me. Outlaws ain't believed in court. And an Indian outlaw, 'specially, wouldn't be believed, no matter how much book learning he's got." Mr. Wallin relighted his pipe and smoked complacently after his naïve confession. "I ain't going to waste that Indian. If I nurse him along and let him pile up trouble for himself and I can get up the courage to shoot a little deeper into *myself*, I ought to be good for six months on the loafing-list. Give me a hoss-pittle for pure comfort. Nothing to do but touch the button! Double pay and pretty girls to pat your pillow and read novels out loud to you! I'm looking ahead to a damn' fine lay-off. I'm lonesome up here! I like to have wimmen to talk to," he sighed.

It did not appear that Warden Wallin had it in mind to hurry or harry his intended prize. When the Kavanagh party started away the next morning Paul's pursuer was still asleep in the "ram-pasture" at Dolan's House, his head bolstered by his case of gin. But Kezar was not without his hopes. Mr. Wallin, it was apparent, was starting on one of his "periodicals." The opportunities for accident presented by a cocksure man, a case of gin, and a persecuted Indian seemed to be by no means inconsiderable.

CHAPTER XIX

Clare Kavanagh tries to fit the round pegs of her pledges and her dreams into the square holes of straight business.

COLONEL MARTHORN found Sebomuk Farm more to his liking!

The comforts of the place served as antidote not merely for the unpleasant features of "roughing it," but for the humiliation he had experienced while he journeyed north. At Sebomuk the president of the Great Temiscouata came into his own. He was able to hold court, after a fashion, with obsequious attachés to guard the path to the throne.

The buildings of the headquarters depot were crowded along the river-bank and the larger structures crowned the hill-crest, behind which stretched the broad fields where the company produced hay and grain and potatoes.

Oddly enough, the only log house in the settlement was almost palatial compared with the other buildings. It stood aristocratically apart by itself. On the real-estate ledgers of the Temiscouata syndicate it was listed as "field-office building." That designation was polite fiction in some measure; but it enabled the company to defray the cost, from the general-expense fund, of keeping up a fine club-house for home-office dignitaries and their friends who enjoyed outings, fishing, and hunting. Though the walls were of logs, the bark of the logs was

smoothed and varnished. There were bath-rooms and other aids to comfort, as well as actual refinements. In the city such things were accepted as matters of fact, but for Temiscouata guests the same comforts found in the wilderness peculiarly intensified the zest of enjoyment. Everybody always had a good time at Sebomuk Farm. Colonel Marthorn and his guests settled down to a house party in a particularly happy frame of mind.

There were fireplaces so big that a man might stand upright in them. But when the roaring flames licked, leaped at, and devoured the heaped logs, the sense of thrift in the beholders was not racked—there were too many trees in the country through which they had journeyed to Sebomuk Farm!

Kenneth, arriving from the north, a rather shabby character in muddy high boots and weather-stained buckskin, found his father in a club rocker in front of the biggest fireplace. The chair was set in the center of a bearskin rug and the colonel was gazing up through cigar smoke at the giant head of a moose above the mantel. Colonel Marthorn's interest in the trophy was considerable because he had discovered, by reading a silver tag, inconspicuously placed, that Kenneth had donated the head.

The son looked so particularly manly and self-assertive and capable when he strode into the room and was contrasted with the other men who had come north with the colonel, that the father was conscious of feeling a bit awkward when he greeted the new arrival. It was a touch of that queer bashfulness which often affects the paternal attitude when the true realization comes that the son is a man in all his attributes, no longer dependent, no longer answerable, only so far as the filial sense of duty

may influence him. And the colonel had found out that the filial sense in Kenneth did not include making his own father a confidant in the most important matter which had ever come between them. Therefore the colonel's awkwardness of greeting was flavored by a certain reserve which the son translated as being "hold-over" resentment. On his own part, Kenneth assumed, by merely a hint of stiffness in his manner, the attitude of one who is defending something and does not propose to be bullied or tricked.

Colonel Marthorn hastened to create a real diversion to mask any embarrassment! He introduced his son to the latter's prospective brother-in-law—Cora Marthorn's trophy of her Alaskan trip. Kenneth had been apprised of her success by letter and was prepared to like the young man because he was also an engineer—a chap who had made good in the difficulties of railroad construction in Alaska. The colonel was not especially concerned about Mr. Philip Winsted's engineering capabilities; paternal ambition on behalf of Cora was set complacently at rest by the knowledge that Winsted senior was the leading capitalist behind the Alaskan railroad.

The two men walked away together to find Cora, after Kenneth had been given man's greeting in hearty fashion by the gentlemen from the home office. Young Mr. Marthorn did not display especial animation when he was assured by young Mr. Winsted, who evidently knew what woods loneliness was like and commiserated Mr. Marthorn, that the ladies who were along with the party were very jolly, and that he hoped, speaking quite frankly, that Mr. Marthorn would like his, Mr. Winsted's, sister, Sally Winsted, real well. She and his darling Cora had become such fast friends!

More than ever was Kenneth convinced that Alaska must be a very remote country, deaf and blind in regard to news; he felt a little thrill of pride in the ability of his family to keep the door shut on a skeleton and to keep Mr. Philip Winsted surrounded by that Alaskan insulation. According to Kenneth's best belief, and he was not by any means an egoist, the whole world had rung with the news that he was married. To find one man—a man almost in his own family—who did not know about that dreadful mistake was consoling. After all, the thing might not be sticking in folks' minds and trickling from their mouths after the fashion which he had been fearing.

Miss Winsted's brown eyes and warm hand and her appraising of his qualities, an interest detected promptly by the object, certainly hinted that she considered him a commodity still available. Without trying to analyze his feelings, he felt distinctly heartened.

He had been doing much pondering during the weeks which had passed since the day when John Kavanagh had been laid to rest. He knew that he liked women and he wanted women to like him. In the city, after he had returned from the West, he had avoided the women who were his friends and who knew what he had done; but he had been wondering all of the time what opinion the right sort of women would hold regarding a man who would elope with an unknown whom he later failed to produce before the eyes of society. He had hurried into the woods! Clare Kavanagh, he realized, did know! Out of all the pictures his mind held of that day of their meeting, most vividly before his mental vision stood her face!

He was obliged to guess at the full quality of her real

feelings, though her few words to him had expressed dislike in caustic fashion. Dislike of him he could understand because, without doubt, she had received as part of her heritage her father's grudge against the Marthorns. But she must know that he, Kenneth, had had no active part in the wilderness warfare; he had been concerned with the down-river mills.

Nevertheless, he had never seen before upon a girl's face such depth of scorn, such flame of fury, such contempt and actual hatred. He felt that the fact that he was the son of Stephen Marthorn could not account for all the contumely she had lavished on him visually. Was she expressing woman's general estimate of him?

He became very amiable in the presence of Miss Winsted. His ideas were in a rather chaotic state, but he knew that he felt less like a social pariah. Miss Kavanagh understood only one phase of the affair; might she not be less blistering with her gaze if she possessed fuller knowledge? He had not the remotest notion how he would be able to convey to her fuller knowledge; he would not admit that he cared a copper for her opinion, anyway. None the less, it was discomfiting to feel that in the realm of fair women there lived a wonderfully handsome girl who loathed him, if her countenance told the truth. Indifference was endurable; he could not hope to win all hearts. But loathing! His interest was piqued; his pride was touched.

That day, just as dusk was settling, after conference with a lackey at the outer door, came another visitor to Colonel Marthorn. It was Eublas Pratt who tiptoed across the glossy floor of the big room and handed to the Temiscouata magnate a letter.

"Excuse me for not letting the brass-button fellow

bring this in," apologized Mr. Pratt, "but we have to obey orders when we go on an X. K. errunt. It's for you, sir. Miss Kavanagh told me to give it to you."

The colonel set eye-glasses on his nose and read. "Where is Miss Kavanagh?" he asked.

"Across the river. In camp on No Man's Gore."

"What are you?"

"One of her explorers, sir."

"Do you tell me that she has come down here with camping outfit?"

"I do, sir."

"I think—I *know* that I made my invitation clear to her," said the colonel, addressing the assembled officers of the syndicate and including Mr. Pratt. "She was asked to come here to the farm and be my guest—my daughter's guest. Hasn't she said anything, sir, to indicate that she understands that?"

Mr. Pratt wagged his head. "All she ever talks to me about is timber operations, and when she gets done talking about them she stops talking."

Colonel Marthorn re-examined the letter. Miss Kavanagh tersely presented her compliments and stated that she would do herself the honor of calling on Colonel Marthorn at ten o'clock the next forenoon. There was no hint of thanks for the invitation he had extended. The colonel felt an impulse to be rude on his own account. He waved the letter, his gesture dismissing Mr. Pratt.

"The letter needs no answer. We await Miss Kavanagh's further commands." He twisted the last word with ironic inflection.

He read the note aloud after Mr. Pratt had departed; he crumpled it and threw it into the fire. "As you know, I came here by Mr. Donaldson's advice, gentlemen. I

came to smooth matters and adjust differences. Here's that young woman throwing my politeness in my face! I don't believe I shall have the patience to humor a girl's confounded tantrums."

"The young woman is wilful, headstrong, prejudiced, and impossible from a business standpoint," was the emphatic comment made by Mr. Deakins, of the directors' board. "When I failed with her I'm afraid you suspected that I had not used my best efforts, Colonel. I'm sorry because you have been insulted, but I'm glad that you are having an opportunity to see for yourself."

"There's no doubt about the attitude she has taken! And she will come swaggering here like an Irish bully starting for Donnybrook. There's no place on this river for that kind of a spirit," declared the colonel. "Our interests are too big to be imperiled by the antics of a foolish girl, puffed by importance."

"This new-woman notion is running mighty close to hysteria," said Mr. Deakins. "We must deal with her on that basis. It's kindness to take a loaded gun away from a reckless child—it's for the child's safety, most of all."

In that frame of mind the gentlemen of the Temiscouata waited for Clare Kavanagh!

Colonel Marthorn, from what he had heard and what he had experienced, had excellent foundation for his belief that the Kavanagh heiress was a rude, self-willed, obstreperous Amazon in her new rôle. He walked to the window and looked out into the night. Across the river the Kavanagh camp-fires flared. They were like banners that proclaimed her independence. It was arrogant declaration, from his viewpoint, that she preferred her rude shelter to his well-housed hospitality.

Clare had her own viewpoint, too, but it was sadly racked by doubts at that moment. Motherly Elisiane had tucked the blankets about the girl and had laid herself down on her own cot in the little tent. The fire which Dumphy tended radiated warmth which breathed upon Clare's cheeks, and the curling flames made pictures for her eyes. She lay there and stared at the fire for a long time, seeming more child than woman in her swathings of blankets.

"Are you awake, Elisiane?" she whispered.

"*Oui, mam'selle.*"

"But don't get up. I don't want anything!" A pause. "Elisiane!"

"*Oui, mam'selle!*"

"I am ashamed." There was mourning in the tone. Elisiane, astonished, sat up on her cot.

"I ought to have told somebody about it long ago, Elisiane. I am speaking out so that my own ears may hear and burn. Haven't you been feeling—now be honest—be my friend—haven't you felt that I ought to be ashamed?"

"*Pourquoi, mam'selle?*"

"I have swaggered about! I have! Perhaps you wouldn't notice it in my gait—but I was swaggering in my heart! I have bragged. All cowards brag. When the Temiscouata men came to me I bragged about what I would do and what I would not do. They must know how to read character. They must know that I'm a coward. I am suspicious of most folks. I have poisoned my own mind right along. I was a wretch at school. I have insulted persons over and over, just as if I didn't know any better. I thought I'd be propping up my pride by coming here and camping like this. But I'm only

ashamed—more and more ashamed. They're looking over here through those big windows and saying that I'm vulgar, discourteous, insulting. It's all true. I allow my ugly temper to rule me. I won't consider what the demands of good-breeding are. I have cheapened myself by coming down here in this fashion. I didn't even explain to Colonel Marthorn why I refused his invitation. I'm ashamed, Elisiane!"

"Pshaw! Wit' all you' money! Phut! You be so good as he is!"

"No, Elisiane!"

"Go snap you' finger to hees nose—like as you snap your whip in the face of Marthorn *jeune!*"

"Don't! Don't!" She shivered in her blankets. "Don't remind me of that face. I have tried so hard to forget it. I hate it. When I shut my eyes I see it and am ashamed."

Elisiane snuggled down on her cot; she did not understand clearly and felt incapable of offering sympathy in a case of this sort where her advice had been so promptly rejected. When drowsiness overcame the dame her last look showed her that the girl's eyes were wide open and were fixed on the fire which was framed in the tent's opening.

Colonel Marthorn, waiting the next forenoon for "the swaggerer," saw a canoe put off from the river-bank opposite the Sebomuk Farm. Clare came up the hill alone. The man who had ferried her remained at the shore.

Kenneth stood beside his father in the broad window. The skies were gray and an occasional rain-shaft smeared cold moisture across the glass. On the wide expanse of the wind-swept slope the slim figure, bending against the blast from the north, seemed pathetic in its loneliness.

"By the way, have you met that girl there since you have been in this section?" the colonel asked his son.

"Merely in a casual way—once."

The president of the Temiscouata scowled and tapped rim of eye-glasses against his teeth; he had the air of a man who had had his predetermined calculations upset and was called on suddenly to make new plans. It was certainly difficult to reconcile what he was looking on with what he had been expecting. "As I remembered her she was husky—a bold-looking young hussy," he muttered, his very vivid prejudices digging into an extremely oozy and slippery memory; John Kavanagh's personality had quite overshadowed everybody else in sight on that memorable day of encounter. "From what you have heard them say about her up in this section—men who really know her—how had I best handle her, Kenneth?"

"As a human being."

"The advice is flippant, sir."

"Not when it's construed on the broad basis of a square deal. But I really have no advice to give you, dad. Furthermore, I have no special hankering to remain during the conference."

"You must stay. In case she displays enough intelligence to have the storage plans explained, we shall have to refer to you for information. But this talking to a girl! Why hasn't she brought some of her bosses with her?"

The colonel's irritability still shadowed him when Clare entered the big room, and the girl hesitated when she saw his face. He owned up to himself that he had expected her to come in with head thrown back and nostrils dilated, picturing thus in his mind the crass Kavanagh spirit of

grudge. But Clare had come in chastened mood from the Gethsemane of her self-reproach. She was exactly what she seemed to be—a trembling slip of a girl, now really frightened at her daring to meet men of affairs and of finance on matters of business which, without doubt, they understood much better than she.

The pause was rather awkward. Colonel Marthorn was decidedly discomposed by her demeanor of appealing humility and felt that some sort of amenity ought to preface blunt business.

"I am sorry you did not care to accept the hospitality of Sebomuk Farm, Miss Kavanagh."

"I think *I* have more reason for sorrow, sir! I apologize for what must seem to you an inexcusable attitude. Will you pardon me if I ask you to let the matter rest without further words?"

The colonel bowed. "My daughter Cora is with me. Perhaps before we sit down to our discussion of business you may like a little talk with her."

"I thank you, Colonel Marthorn, but, please, may we not attend to the business at once?"

He gave her a seat at the big table in the middle of the room and the gentlemen of the Temiscouata directorate took their seats. In spite of some very natural reflections regarding the nature of her courage and her grit, Kenneth Marthorn, standing apart beside the window, found in the situation a tableau which suggested a maiden martyr in the presence of the judges of the Inquisition.

The colonel, from the head of the table, explained why he had come into the north country. He tactfully avoided all references to past troubles.

"I'll tell you frankly what the Great Temiscouata wants, Miss Kavanagh," he went on, "even though I

feel that the gentlemen who have interviewed you in the past have explained the thing well."

"I think I understand, sir."

"But a thorough understanding should have produced better results, in my opinion. All interests will be better served if one company controls the Toban. Our company needs more land, more timber. We have millions invested in mills and must not run the risk of any hold-up of the drives. My son Kenneth—I'm glad you have already met him—is making a general survey of the section's hydraulic problems."

Clare did not turn her head to follow the colonel's gesture indicating the young man.

"We have secured many of the old charters for dam privileges—we expect legislation to give us new and additional rights. It all points to a single-headed control of the river and its tributaries. And that's the reason, Miss Kavanagh, why the Temiscouata wants to buy out the X. K., as your company is called, I believe. We want all rights and titles and we are willing to pay the price the appraisers agree on. Pardon the comment, but I should think you'd be glad to be relieved of the responsibility you have assumed."

She replied gravely and in low tones. "Colonel Marthorn, I feel that if we discuss this matter any further we shall come to arguments, and arguments may stir fresh quarrels. Arguments, furthermore, will not prevail with me. I have definitely made up my mind. I say this respectfully, but I mean what I say: I will not sell the X. K."

There was a long silence. Clare broke it. "I suppose there is nothing further to be said. I realize that this seems like folly to gentlemen who understand business.

So I'll not take up your time with explanations of my folly."

"Just a moment, Miss Kavanagh," interposed Colonel Marthorn, a grim set to his jaws. "Your decision to carry on this warfare along the Toban does need some kind of explanation."

"I do not propose to carry on any warfare, sir. I only want to keep my father's business together because he gave his life to it, loved it, and died believing that I would carry it on. He was on the river before you came here. Isn't there room for all of us?" she asked, plaintively.

"The question must be surveyed from another viewpoint, Miss Kavanagh. We propose to invest large sums in permanent dams. We admit frankly that the matter of riparian rights and ownership along the river is so badly tangled that endless litigation is in sight unless one faction gets out of the way as gracefully as possible. I would not have put the thing as bluntly as you have—that there is not room for all of us on the Toban. Let us say that good business suggests that the Temiscouata should have full control."

"What becomes of the independent operators, sir? There are more than fifty of them who have done business through the X. K., and they have all of their money tied up in camps, equipment, and supplies."

"Mr. Deakins is better acquainted with that phase than I am. What do you say, Mr. Deakins?"

"Independent operating in these days is wasteful and slipshod. The Great Temiscouata has a forestry program which must be developed by strict following of policy. Otherwise we won't be protecting our investment in mills. It is absolutely impossible to allow independent operating if we are to carry out our policy."

The girl sat straighter in her chair; color touched her cheeks. "I suppose I am talking like a mere woman instead of like a person dealing with straight business," she admitted. "But there is something in the X. K. that doesn't belong with straight business. It is a big thing for me just as it was for my father. It is the soul of the X. K."

Colonel Marthorn smiled.

"That sounds trite, but I don't know how to put it any stronger. The X. K. has a soul, gentlemen. It's the spirit of the men who work for it. I know what sort your men are—I have watched them come and go! They are always coming and going. They are mostly vagabonds whom city employment agencies have scraped up for you."

"It is not always possible to hire a full complement of nature's noblemen for thirty dollars a month and board!" said one of the directors.

"What I said does not call for sarcasm, sir! I'm trying to avoid it on my own part. I might suggest, otherwise, that when your company hires men who run away from their jobs up here and forfeit their pay the Temiscouata gets considerable labor for nothing. And they go straggling south from the Toban and turn into thieves and vagrants who raid farms and terrorize honest folks. Most of the X. K. men own homes and have families. Against what sort of competition am I putting those men if I sell out?"

"We are traveling rather far afield, Miss Kavanagh," objected the president. "If we should sit here and assure you that we can settle the labor problems of the world we should be misleading you with falsehood."

"I don't know much about the labor problems of the

world. I am dealing with a labor problem right here at home, Colonel Marthorn!"

"The men will naturally adjust themselves to new conditions. But I can neither predict nor promise what the new conditions will be."

"I understand that perfectly, sir. That's strictly business talk. Business can't afford to dream. You can't predict what will become of the homes in Sainte Agathe, in Sobois Settlement, and in the other little villages the men of the X. K. have built up. Nor can I predict if you have set out to have your way in these parts. But I can *promise*, sir! I promise my men that the X. K. will not sell out."

The colonel showed anger. "Are we to infer that you hold the opinion that our company has come up here to tear down instead of build up?"

"Your question is too general, sir! I will not reply. Let us particularize! If the Temiscouata should be in full control in the Toban would you continue to operate the Sainte Agathe sawmills, the spool-wood mill, the box-board factory at Base Falls, and all the other mills the X. K. owns or feeds?"

"Our business is to make paper, Miss Kavanagh."

"Yes, and your mills are far down the river—a long way from Sainte Agathe!" She stood up. "If you feel that I have said too much, gentlemen, or have been too outspoken, please consider that I am trying to protect a sacred trust and have tried to make you understand that I'm not merely an obstinate girl. Oh, you would understand if you had seen my father's face when he looked down on the little village! And as he felt so feel I! Business would call it selling. I would call it betrayal—and I'd never have another happy day. I'd not have the

heart to go to my father's grave! I want to do my best. I want to succeed. I want to protect my own people—save their homes for them. I ask this of you as much for them as for myself—please let us alone!”

She spoke with all the earnestness of her soul, and when she had finished she put her hands to her face, hiding sudden emotion.

“I rather resent your insinuation that a responsible corporation is handled by ogres,” stated the colonel.

She controlled herself instantly.

“I beg your pardon, sir! I see I ought to have declined to give you the explanation you asked for. I fear I have exposed only sentiment instead of sense.”

“Miss Kavanagh, I respect your sentiment—I compliment your ambition. But the Temiscouata has its interests, too, and I warn you that—”

She broke in sharply. Her demeanor was as cold as his. “I shall construe a warning as a threat. I do not want to quarrel.”

She turned and walked out of the room. The astonished president of the Temiscouata called twice to her, but she paid no heed. He kicked his chair away from himself and went to the window and watched her hurrying down the slope to her canoe. She was so small a thing to be such a demoralizing trig in the mighty machinery of the Great Temiscouata!

When the colonel turned from the window his son smiled on him with unusual exuberance of rancor-reviving amiability.

“What are you grinning at, sir?” The father seemed to be in no measure soothed by the smile. “Do you see any humor in the contumacy of that confounded girl?”

“Not exactly! But the tableau just now reminded me

of something which has always given me a laugh every time I have remembered it. That's all" He strolled toward the door of the billiard-room. "If the meeting's over, Deakins, come in and take a cue."

"Reminded you of *what?*" insisted the colonel, snappishly.

"The time the whole pack of the Beechwood Kennels was held up in a farmer's dooryard by a cat protecting her kittens. It had to be seen to be appreciated."

The last statement seemed to be justified by the gloomy countenances of the directors; they did not show that they saw anything funny in such a state of affairs.

"Gentlemen, I trust and believe that I have none of the qualities of a buccaneer in me," declared the president. "But the idea of that girl holding up a sensible adjustment of affairs on this river in order to constitute herself guardian of a lot of able-bodied men is damnable nonsense. Whim! It's nothing else!" He cracked his knuckles on the table. "It's an act of kindness to her, in the long run, to make her sick of her job."

Donald Kezar, rebuffed when he had offered himself as her companion in her adventure that day, was standing on the shore, watching Clare return across the river. Under his breath he was reiterating a certain determination which Colonel Marthorn had just voiced.

On the other shore Donald put out his hand to assist her.

Clare Kavanagh, journeying between those two poles of malefic mental influence, may have felt psychic sense of evil intent toward her.

When she had gone out from the presence of those who represented so much power, out of that room of warmth and sumptuous furnishings, the sleety rain beat upon her

face and mingled with her tears. Suddenly she felt afraid and very lonely and helpless. She pulled down the brim of her hat and hid her face from Explorer Pratt when he held the canoe steady for her.

At that moment he typified for her comforting strength and protection, consoling friendship and loyalty. Her enthusiasm and her self-reliance were gone. Those men whom she had faced alone had not seemed to understand. They had given her no assurance that they would co-operate with her or keep their hands off her interests. Mutely, but none the less effectively, they had impressed on her that they considered as business folly her guardianship of what was to her a sacred trust. After that contact with cynicism the feeling that she was back with her own produced reaction in her ardent and impulsive nature.

She clasped the outstretched hand in both her own and looked up at him. "Oh, Donald!" she sobbed.

It was appeal by helplessness, it was unpremeditated surrender, it was hunger for sympathy. There was not in her any of the thrill of the conviction that she was in love with Donald. But in her need and her loneliness she would have been glad if he had put his arms about her; she knew she would not mind the presence of Mr. Pratt. She was quite prepared to astonish that gentleman by turning to him, holding Donald's hand, and announcing that there stood the man whom she had chosen.

But the lover did not realize that triumph beckoned to him from her brimming eyes and her upturned face. In the case of other girls who had looked up at him in that fashion he had been bold and prompt and had conquered. But he had convinced himself—and she had seemed to furnish plenty of facts—that her emotions were not like those of other girls. She had expressed her opinion of

precipitate love-making. So he did not guess what she was offering. He displayed the same sullenness with which he had seen her depart on her errand. "You ought to have taken me along with you. You have been over there alone and they had their chance to browbeat you. I can see what the trouble is!"

Could he see? She lifted her pressing palms from his hand.

"You're no match for that gang of robbers. You ought to understand it and hand the whole thing over to *me!*" His emphasis on the last word pricked her pride.

For a moment she put her forearm across her eyes, steadying herself. Mentally she was stepping backward, as one walks back from the edge of a cliff, seeking safety after the dizziness of a desire to throw oneself into the depths. She had been about to give him her pledge—and she knew that to whomever she gave her pledge it would not be fickle promise.

In spite of her mingled emotions a few moments before, her new mood was that of exultation which she could hardly understand. It was not fully explained by the thought that she had escaped making a fool of herself. That thought was merely comforting and did not account for the deeper sense of joy and freedom.

"Hurrah! That's over!" she cried.

Donald turned sour gaze in the direction of the log palace on the hill. "You ought to have taken me along, I say!"

"I almost did take you. But it has come out all right." He did not in the least understand what her expression signified. "Break camp," she commanded. "There's a tight roof on Dolan's House!"

CHAPTER XX

Colonel Marthorn comes into contact with a paragon of probity and has his suspicions aroused by excess of virtue and superlative of promise.

WHEN Kenneth informed his sister that Clare Kavanagh had hurried away from the house Miss Cora showed only languid concern. "Really, I don't know as I remember how the girl looked—that's as much interest as I took in her at school. My only distinct memory is that she was very pert in some petty affair about money—and I left her in disgust. I hope father managed to set her where she belongs."

"He did seat her—at the foot of the long table!"

"Kenneth, whatever she is up here or whatever she has done, father is very much annoyed. All the way up-river he has been talking about that girl and her obstinate folly. Hasn't he disposed of her for good?"

"She came—she saw—and I think it's fifty-fifty on the conquering proposition. I believe if I'd had the say in that meeting I would have capitulated," he added.

"If that's humor, it's very unpleasant, Kenneth."

"Perhaps it isn't humor. Since I have heard Miss Clare Kavanagh present her case to our folks, my mood, I realize now, hasn't been humorous. She's the squarest little brick and the bravest little champion who ever made fast her helmet with a hat-pin and went forth to battle."

He sounded as if he meant it. With astonishment she made comment to that effect.

"I do mean it!"

She gave him a reproachful look.

They had been walking in one of the glass-sheltered porches after Deakins had been called away from the billiard-table by summons to a conference in the big room.

"But you mustn't worry about me, Cora. I have meant it when I have said that a certain experience has been good for me. I'm going to stay in the woods for a long time. I haven't the least desire to come down to town. Up here I'm away from all chance for mischief and you and the family are beautifully benefited because I'll be nowhere in sight to provoke new gossip or stir up any of the warmed-over stuff. And, in course of time, everybody will forget all about me—and I'll raise whiskers and be a hermit up here."

"That's senseless—any such sacrifice!"

"But it isn't sacrifice! It's the way I'm feeling these days. I don't have a distracting thought to keep me from the job. Even this little taste of house party rather bores me. I know we must go in now and play cards. If it weren't for this rain I'd be on my way back up-river!" he added, with manner revealing disgust. "There I go! Hesitating because of rain! Why, Cora, a few more days of this sybaritism will spoil me for the woods. It's dangerous staying here!" He paused and peered through the rain-streaked glass of the porch. The Kavanagh tents had disappeared from the knoll on No Man's Gore. "She and her folks have gone, rain or no rain! It makes me feel guilty."

He did not hide from himself that he also felt a sudden

pang of queer loneliness. He had not been conscious of any especial comfort because Clare was sojourning across the river, but now that she had gone away the whole place seemed to be divested of some point of peculiar interest. He gazed upon the mist-shrouded bend of the river and through him ran that sudden, familiar, tingling thrill which is the preliminary of the setting forth upon adventure. "I don't think it's going to hold on to rain long," he continued, speaking as much to himself as to Cora. "I believe I'll make a start."

"A start?" she demanded, incredulously.

"Yes! Back to the job!"

"But father says we are to rest here a week or two. You must stay here with us! He expects you to stay."

"I'd be making a fine exhibition of my spirit of enterprise, loafing here a fortnight under the eyes of five of the directors just at the time of year when we're hustling to get ahead of the snow with our surveys!"

They went to the card-room, answering a summoning signal tapped upon a near-by window. Young Mr. Marthorn took advantage of every dummy hand to rise and make protracted survey of the weather, staring up toward the mist-shrouded bend.

After a time Colonel Marthorn came into the card-room. He apologized to the guests because he was obliged to call Kenneth back to the business meeting.

At the door of the big room son halted father. "I'm glad you called me out, dad! I warn you that I shall make further excuse out of it and say that I must be back on my job. I want to get away to-day as soon as possible."

"It's out of the question."

"But I have shown you the plans and the maps—"

"We have been discussing the plans. We believe that

there must be important modifications." He opened the door quickly, giving Kenneth no time for questions or further objections.

The maps were outspread on the table and the president of the Great Temiscouata tapped finger on first one and then another while he discoursed on the changes which had been considered. Several times Kenneth tried to get in a word, but was checked impatiently by his father. One of the directors took down the president's instructions.

"I hope I have made myself clear," said the colonel.

"You have, sir!"

"And I'll provide you with a copy of my instructions so that you may check up your memory."

"Thank you! But allow me to observe that by sticking carefully to the details of your instructions I may be hampered in the grand design. *You* have only the maps and figures to go by, but *I* have actual and practical knowledge of the section and the resources."

"I have not spoken of any grand design, as you call it."

"Oh no! Nor did I expect you to waste time in dwelling on the details of the obvious."

"I fail to see any particular thing that is obvious in my suggestions as to change of plans."

"I must respect your statement, sir." Kenneth was blandly polite. "My training obliges me to group causes in order to estimate the effect. Since you gentlemen are not practical engineers, it may be that you have concerned yourselves with the details only of the changes—missing the effect of the grand design. I don't care to proceed on any misunderstanding. In order to be distinctly efficient I must be posted as to your real motives."

Colonel Marthorn knew better than any of the rest of

them what depths were covered by his son's delusive humility. "Motives?"

"Yes, sir! Your changes are not developments of the hydraulic resources of the river. You're taking the river by the neck and throttling it, so far as the rights of anybody else are concerned. I ask you to be frank with me; otherwise we can't co-operate properly."

"Those changes are for our best interests, sir!"

"Yes, but if you don't want to hog everything for the Temiscouata and choke everybody else, you'd better not suggest those changes."

The colonel was silent, choler painting red patches on his cheeks.

"If it is the plan," the chief engineer went on, "I should be informed plainly, because my practical knowledge will enable me to put the big slam over in better shape than is provided for in these suggested changes." He patted his hand on a map.

"'Big slam'!" quoted the colonel, with choler. "There is not one word of intimation that we desire to injure anybody else. But, having secured our charters, we have a right to go ahead as we think best."

"Have copies of all the charters been deposited with me, sir?"

"They have."

"Where do I find my legal authority to raise the Grindstone dam so as to flow dead-water back into Knoptuk stream so far that the splash-dams are flooded out?"

"You are guessing they will be flooded."

"We do not *guess* in my business. I *know* they will be flooded. What are you guessing in regard to Grindstone dam?"

"It is not guesswork. We need the extra head."

"You do not. More water there will bother the Temiscouata drive, that's all. It will spread the independent, tributary water so much that rival drives stand a chance of being scattered—and, once scattered, a quick drop in water at Grindstone will leave millions of logs hung up high and dry."

"I am not pleased with your readiness to ascribe to us any motives outside those of straight business." The directors of the Temiscouata sat back and did not presume to interfere in this duel between father and son.

"It is possible for irresponsible understrappers to be very careless in handling the gates of a dam, sir."

"You have your instructions. Follow them."

"Very well! Now let me call your attention to the fact that there are two outlets of North Ebeemah. I am ordered to blow the ledge under the dam of the upper outlet so as to give us three feet more drag on the big lake. There's a shoal thoroughfare, the Sickie-hook, between the big lakes. Do you realize that the small lower lake alone will not give head enough to drive—say—the X. K. logs, to speak of only one independent operator?" He spoke with rather careless inflection and looked out of the window into the rain.

"Nobody has any charter rights on Ebeemah! We must take over what we need before somebody anticipates us; we shall protect ourselves by securing a legislative act next winter."

"You have ordered a canal which kills Whirlingstone lake and stream for those who try to drive by the regular course. The X. K. folks are starting a new operation on Whirlingstone."

"Have you taken a brief for the Kavanagh interests?"

"Not at all! I'm merely pointing to the concrete effect

some of your—I suppose—theoretical changes will have on the interests of other folks who have money invested on the river and who are trying to succeed.”

“Your surmises are wholly unjust! They’re insulting!”

Kenneth went nearer to his father and sat on the corner of the table in an attitude which suggested that he wanted to take some of the edge of formality off the interview. “I think you have made a mistake by coming into the woods, sir, and getting too close to affairs. Pardon me, but I feel that your past method of handling the company was preferable. Your opinions were not colored by personalities.”

“Since I have been in these confounded woods I have been obliged to change some of my opinions.”

“I hope they have not been changed so that the spirit of fairness no longer prevails.”

“Do you presume to intimate that I’m doing anything except protecting our interests? You have stood in this room to-day and heard a notional, obstinate girl threaten to follow a program which is sure to prolong this devilish warfare up here. Her whims do not belong to straight business.”

“If you were in your office in New York, father—away from the details—you wouldn’t be giving out such orders as these changes suggest. I beg your pardon again and ask for the indulgence of these gentlemen for stepping outside my position as engineer. I ask this—only this, sir. Confirm these orders after you have been back in the city for a week.”

It was advice far from tactful when spoken in the presence of those listeners. It came from impulse—all at once Kenneth had seen again with mental vision that lonely little figure toiling up the slope against the wind.

To the father this seemed not merely insubordination—it was more of that patronizing superiority which had inflicted on his sensitiveness ever since he had been in the north country; it was of a piece with the son's attitude on another occasion, and resentment revived.

"Get off the corner of that table!" he blustered. "Stand up! I am the president of the Great Temiscouata. You are the chief engineer. You are to take no liberties with me on account of our relationship. You are to draw no inferences from plain orders. You are to go ahead and execute. If you are not ready to do that you may sit down and write out your resignation."

"I had no business talking to you as I did," the young man confessed. "I can see, all at once, that the complications on account of relationship are considerable. I'll obey your suggestion in regard to the writing of the resignation." While he wrote hastily he said: "I can say better what I have to say when this is in your hands, sir. I feel that I must say it."

He gave the sheet of paper to his father and stood erect. "I know how conditions are up this way—and how they will continue until some honest law gets in all its work. In settling some affairs, as all of us have found out many times, a fight can't be avoided. I'm not averse to a fight under the right conditions. I'll stand by my company all the time that it is protecting itself and getting its rights. But I won't go robbing hen-roosts in the dark, and I won't walk up behind any man and hit him back of the ear when he isn't looking."

"Your metaphor is not illuminating, sir," snapped the colonel.

"It is a little raw, I'll confess. I don't mean to intimate that the Temiscouata asks any such service from an

employee. What I want to say is that in a fair fight the real man gives the other fellow warning and time enough to pull his gun. I'll admit that our company has the right to develop for its own advantage, even stretching its privileges a little; that has been the fashion up here—the others are doing it."

"What sort of treatment did we get from the X. K. last spring?"

"A polite word to fit it does not occur to me just now," admitted the engineer. "However, according to all reports, it was good open fighting—no skulking! Now, as I understand it, we propose to keep up the fight. What kind of a word are we going to send to the other side?"

"No word at all! Most certainly not! What? Betray our company's private affairs?"

"The word may bring about a compromise."

"The performance will bring about a better one. Hold on! I'll have no more talk." The president held up the paper on which Kenneth had written his resignation. "Will you obey the orders of the company?"

"I will, after I have notified the other side what we intend to do on behalf of our interests."

The colonel laid the paper on the table, and a bang of his fist on the sheet emphasized what he said. "Your resignation is accepted."

"I'm sorry that it has been accepted on such grounds."

"The Great Temiscouata cannot afford to accept that resignation on such grounds," declared Director Deakins. "It can't afford to stand in any such light. I do remonstrate that the bald way in which Engineer Marthorn has put the thing does our intentions injustice, but his very bluntness reveals how the thing may be looked at by those who are not able to understand our position. We can't

afford to have our interests prejudiced by false reports when it's time to take our affairs before the Legislature." He was deferential, but he was firm.

Colonel Marthorn maintained wrathful silence, his knuckles on the paper. He was in no fashion soothed by the flicker of a deprecatory smile on his son's face.

Another director, more of a diplomat, suggested that perhaps their engineer's blunt way of speaking might give false impression as to his own real intentions as well as their own. "I'm sure you would not do anything which would hurt the company, Mr. Marthorn."

"I am standing for what will help the company, sir, in the long run. Tricky triumphs will hurt us."

"Kenneth, I'll have no more of those contemptible insinuations," broke in the father. "Nobody knows my business ethics better than you."

"Yes, sir! By precept and example! You have trained me well."

The colonel's lack of enthusiasm when he looked at his son suggested that the father felt that the training had been altogether too good. This prodigy of probity seemed to be trying to put high-minded business men to shame. The colonel was not wholly convinced that Kenneth's sole and real animus emanated from punctilious honor; close kin are often most reluctant to admit one's possession of angelic qualities.

"I wish you'd withdraw your resignation, Mr. Marthorn!" pleaded the diplomatic director.

The son observed that his father jammed knuckles harder on the sheet of paper.

"Colonel Marthorn, will you ask your son to withdraw his resignation?"

"I will not." After a pause the colonel went on:

"This is confoundedly disagreeable, gentlemen. I feel it quite impossible to reconcile my attitude as father of this young man with my position as president of the company. For me to continue to preside is not in good taste. I ask Mr. Deakins to take the chair."

Colonel Marthorn stepped away from the table. "Kenneth, I am now speaking to you as your father, not as an officer of the Temiscouata Company. After what you have said here you don't belong with the company. I ask you to insist that your resignation be accepted. Gentlemen, I ask you, also, to accept that resignation. I warn you that this young man will not serve you as employers should be served. That will bring to me disappointment and shame."

"But, on the other hand, Colonel Marthorn, he is a young man who is refreshingly honest. The Temiscouata must value that asset highly. He is the head of our hydraulic survey and is right in the middle of his job. Absolutely we can't afford to let him go. I say it in his presence, for I want to match his honesty in declarations. Is there any gentleman of the directors here present who believes that the resignation should be accepted?"

They wagged their heads, denying.

"We humbly beg your pardon, Colonel Marthorn, for our stand in the matter. If we have offended you as president you must admit that we have complimented you as father." Deakins turned to Kenneth. "You see, sir, it's our sentiment that you should withdraw your resignation. The company's best interests require that you should remain on the work you've undertaken. And there are no strings attached to this proposition. You are left free to work for our best interests as your judgment dictates."

"In that case I have no reasons for resigning. Gentlemen, you have my gratitude."

Mr. Deakins slowly tore up the paper.

Father and son matched memories in their mutual stare; on a minor matter Kenneth had declared in the home library that he would give the president of the Temiscouata Company a run in the board meeting, and now, on a big matter, son had given father that run and had been victorious. Behind the grimness of the colonel's countenance Kenneth detected the paternal admiration.

"Dad, it's all these infernal woods! Everything is topsyturvy! After you get back to the city you'll see that it's all right." He hurried to his father with hand outstretched, and when the colonel accepted the hand-clasp Kenneth put his left arm caressingly on the senior's shoulder.

"I didn't mean to bark so loud! And there may not be much bite, after all!"

"Under what window do you propose to sit first and howl your warnings about the goblins of the Temiscouata?" grumbled the president.

"Let me assure you, sir, and you, too, gentlemen, that your generosity in meeting me, as you have, ties me up with a big responsibility." Mr. Deakins and the diplomatic director exchanged significant glances. "I hope I'm not a blunderer. I shall do my best to smooth things between the interests on the river. Why I talked to you as I have done was because I felt that I was in a position to deal with the matter more directly than anybody else. I want to get general co-operation in the right kind of development. If I was a little outspoken, please make allowances for the enthusiasms of youth." He smiled appealingly.

"Tact! Tact will go a long way," affirmed Mr. Deakins. "And always remember, of course, the company that's behind you."

"Now, as to the changes which you have suggested!"

The directors turned their eyes upon the president, referring it to him, and were silent.

"To many of the changes you offered no objections, as I understand it, Kenneth."

"Oh no! Certainly not! They were changes which will enable me to spend more money for firmer construction and more permanent improvement."

"Attend to those changes first. Report to me in writing your objections to the other changes and we'll consider modifications in the general plans."

"I'll send the report to you at the home office." He walked to the window. The clouds were higher and the rain had ceased.

"You'd better prepare it here and give it to me."

"I need to make a little further inspection of the sections in order to be definite. I'm going to make my get-away at once, dad. I ought to be back on the job."

"We'll allow you a few days' vacation—while I'm up here."

"I don't need it. Come along with me and help me to say good-by to the ladies. If you don't let me go I'll appeal from you to the directors!"

They laughed—and laughter always aids an exit. Kenneth walked to the door and his father followed.

Colonel Marthorn waited in the reception-hall until his son had sent orders to his canoemen to have everything ready for a start inside a half-hour.

When they were at the door of the card-room the

colonel halted the young man. "Kenneth, if old Kavanagh were alive would you run to him with tattle about our plans?"

"Being an engineer, I don't like to theorize in regard to something which can never be tested."

"Well, then, we'll deal with something nearer a fact! Are you going to run to the Kavanagh girl with tattle?"

"You complained of my metaphor—I complain of your name for what I consider good business."

"You are going to her, are you?"

"Yes! She heads the X. K."

"Aren't you showing a little too eager haste?"

"I am going back to my work, sir."

"Most praiseworthy industry! I'm glad to have such a son!"

"Good Heavens! dad, you don't think, do you, that I'm in love with Clare Kavanagh?"

"Aren't you in love with her?"

"Most certainly not!"

"Then I'm truly worried, Kenneth! The case is a desperate one."

"Why do you say that to me?" demanded the son, with indignation.

"Because, when I was trying to save you from a piece of folly, you told me that same thing about another woman and with just as much earnestness." He leaned forward close to Kenneth. "You lallygagging young pup, if you make love to that Kavanagh girl I hope she'll slap your face. I believe she'll do it."

"So do I," acknowledged the son. "As a matter of fact, she showed quite an inclination to do it the first time I ever met her—and I wasn't venturing to make love to her either. I admit that that past performance has given

you ground for suspicion regarding me, but in this case you may dismiss all your worries."

He opened the card-room door and bowed his father in.

Kenneth was honest enough to admit that he had never before posed as mentor of morals or model of incorruptibility. He had talked to his superiors as a saint might preach to sinners. He had been conscious of a little surprise at finding himself to be such an inflexible and tender-conscienced truepenny.

But, while the chief engineer of the Temiscouata had been championing the rights of the company's rivals, his principal mental picture was of a slim girl who came up the slope from the river alone, breasting the gale and the rain. When he had said that the spirit of compromise urged him to warn others of a surprise attack in the usurpation of rights, he knew, as he had confessed to his father, that he probably would go to Clare Kavanagh first of all.

Considering her hostile attitude in regard to him, he felt great joy and took much pride in this new spirit of perfectly unselfish chivalry—it seemed to be the pure product!

Kenneth hurried his leave-taking in a way which astonished the guests and elicited furious side-reproaches from his sister.

Colonel Marthorn turned from the window, in the big room, after he had watched his son embark at the foot of the slope.

"We have been talking the matter over, Colonel," said Director Deakins. "We hope you think we acted for the best."

"I thank you for relieving me as you did. But I was sincere in suggesting that you accept Kenneth's resigna-

tion. I do not defend his attitude. On the face of things he has taken advantage of the fact that he is my son."

"Of course, that fact had its effect with us. It's best to be frankly honest. But I voiced the principal reason when I said we could not afford to lose your son."

"I thank you again."

"He seemed to be considerably stirred by sudden impulse—a little too warm, if I may say so. I thought we'd best handle him with some diplomacy."

"It's always the best way," declared the diplomatic director. "When we gave him his way he immediately cooled off, as you noticed. I'm sure he will devote all his efforts to making compromises in our favor."

Colonel Marthorn did not comment on that statement; he rubbed his nose.

"When I was very small I was unruly, my mother has told me," ventured another director. "If she wanted to keep me busy and quiet she used to set me down on the floor, smear molasses on my fingers, and give me a feather to pick back and forth. I beg your pardon, Colonel, if the reference seems too pointed."

"It is not, sir! It's decidedly to the point," affirmed the father. He felt that he understood better than they how well the anecdote applied. "Gentlemen, you have been very indulgent in the case of my son. However, now that he has his molasses and his feather, we'll go right on with our plans to run the Great Temiscouata as a straight business proposition."

CHAPTER XXI

Voyagers who came to Dolan's House and tarried for the night under a roof which covered heartburnings.

FOR a reason which his canoemen did not clearly understand, even though the engineer attempted some sort of explanation to placate them for having to push on long after darkness had settled, Marthorn declared that they must reach Dolan's House that night. In his eagerness for haste he relieved the men alternately, so that there was always fresh strength at bow or stern paddle.

As to Dolan's House! It is one of the Toban institutions, a caravansary at the confluence of streams, a jumping-off place for this trail or that, a big, unpainted box of a hulk with calk-pitted floors and whittled benches and walls yellowed by the shaggy and unkempt heads of those who have lounged in tipped-back chairs. The dead odor of past and gone boiled dinners has made friendly compact to settle forever in Dolan's House along with the mustiness which has come from the drying of many woolen garments and water-soaked boots.

But as offsets to the looks and the atmosphere there are roaring open fires down-stairs and stoves in all the upper rooms, with dry birch and beech sticks piled high in boxes. The fuel serves another purpose; a stick of wood flung down-stairs by an impatient guest serves

instead of a bell to summon a profane hired man to perform required service. Also, nobody ever goes hungry from Dolan's House, and Tobias Dolan, with his three hundred pounds of avoirdupois jammed tightly between the arms of his chair, advertises his table excellently and truthfully. Whenever he can be forced to leave his game of cribbage he rises and goes off absent-mindedly, with the chair sticking to him.

He rose and came to meet Marthorn of the Temiscouata with outstretched hand, being a crafty publican with ability to greet the valued guest politely or to kick the obstreperous intruder out of the house and on his way.

"How be ye?" inquired Host Dolan, giving clue as to why he owned the nickname "How-be-ye Tobe."

"I am very well," returned Guest Marthorn, swinging his pack to a hook on the wall. "But I'd be a great deal better if I could have something to eat."

Dolan tipped back his head, closed his eyes, and shouted into the surrounding ether, letting his words wing with a sort of wireless indifference as to destination. "Wimmen! Hoy there! Suppers for three!" He sat down into the chair that had been sticking to his haunches. "The venison pie won't be as good as if you were here to git it at regular supper-time. However, it will be hotted up for you and you'll git fried 'tat'es, riz bread and biscuits, prunes, gingerbread, and apple, squash, and punkin pie." Mr. Dolan, in his daily promulgation of menu, did not ask guests what they would have; he told them what they would "git."

Host Dolan had numerous guests. In front of both fireplaces were groups sitting in the haze of tobacco smoke. Straddling a short bench was a bearded woods minstrel

who was twisting a moaning accordion, furnishing accompaniment to his rendition of an interminable ballad in regard to the exploits of one Lord Lovell. Facing the songster, straddling the other end of the bench, was Warden Jesse Wallin, drunkenly beating time with a forefinger.

Kenneth, returning from the wash-room, where he had managed to find one fairly reassuring space on the roller towel, strolled near the group whom he had recognized as the men of the Kavanagh party. Explorers Pratt and Niles he knew, and they spoke to him without any show of animosity. Donald Kezar did not turn his head; he sat and smoked and stared into the fire, elbows on his knees.

After considering the matter for a few moments, the engineer went into a corner where Host Dolan had established his cigar-showcase; on a blank page in his notebook Kenneth wrote a few words, then he crumpled the paper, went back to the fire, and tossed the missive into the flames. Sending a note to Clare Kavanagh might look like something else than mere business. He determined to make the thing open enough so that gossip would be disarmed.

"May I have a word with you, Mr. Pratt?" he asked.

The explorer followed when the engineer stepped back to the cigar-case.

"I am speaking to you because I noticed that you brought Miss Kavanagh across the river to-day. If she has not retired will you find out whether she will be willing to see me to-night on a matter of business?"

"Yes, sir! I'll find out."

"Tell her it has to do with what came up at the conference to-day. I must talk with her in private. Please

ask her to excuse my suggesting it; I'm sure that Mrs. Dolan will allow us the use of the sitting-room."

"Yes, sir!"

"You'll find me in the dining-room—I'll hurry my supper."

His food was already on the dumb-Betty, a circular contrivance of three tiers, which was revolved by a guest who desired helpings from this dish or that. The women who had loaded on the plates and platters left the room, for the Betty was an efficient waiter.

After a long time it occurred to Kenneth, when he reached for his pie on the top tier, that Miss Kavanagh was either showing most humane respect for his hunger or else she was having some trouble in arriving at a decision in regard to him. He felt that the latter supposition was probably true; therefore what Mr. Pratt had to report when Kenneth came upon the explorer waiting at the dining-room door was distinctly cheering.

"She is in the sitting-room, sir. She told me not to disturb you at your supper."

The center-table with album and Bible on the crocheted mat, the hooked rugs and the rugs of braided rags, the hanging-lamp, the worsted mottoes—the corner whatnot with its little treasures—all the homely comforts and adornments of the room seemed to be a fitting setting for a friendly talk.

She was standing when he entered.

He could not assure himself that she was at all cordial; she was very polite, with an air of indifference which piqued him; at Ste. Agathe she had certainly exhibited interest in him that was peculiar and engrossing, even if it was not flattering. In a manner which subtly suggested assumed meekness she sat down in a small rocking-chair;

a haircloth sofa was nearest him and he sat on that, but he seemed to be enthroned rather than seated and was at a disadvantage; he felt really self-conscious and decided that she had perceived it.

"I am not sure that you noticed me at Sebomuk to-day, Miss Kavanagh. You did not look in my direction." It was an awkward opening for a business talk, and he knew it, but the impulse to draw her out a bit was controlling him.

"I saw you, Mr. Marthorn."

"Thank you! Then I need not inform you that I heard all that was said on both sides. Allow me to say *this*—it may explain why I have asked permission to talk with you: I am intensely interested in what you are trying to do for the X. K. men. I believe your stand is right. I offer my sincere best hopes that you may succeed."

"Are you speaking with authority from your company or simply for yourself, Mr. Marthorn?"

"Mostly for myself, I admit. But there is a company side to the matter. I have some rather important information to give you. With your permission, of course! It relates to what came up after you left."

"Will you be frank enough to tell me just what your purpose is?"

"Certainly! I want you to be protected."

"Against what?"

"Unfair strategy."

"Planned by your company?"

"Yes, Miss Kavanagh."

"What is your position with the company at the present time?"

"I am chief engineer of the hydraulic survey."

"Are you to continue in their service?"

"I am."

"And you come to me with a proposal to reveal your company secrets?" Her tone was acrid.

"That is not accurate. What I desire to tell you I'd say to you just as freely in the presence of my father and the directors."

"Pardon the triteness of the old saying, but concede the appositeness, 'Distrust the Greeks bearing gifts.' Again pardon me, Mr. Marthorn! I sound as if I were trying to parade some of my Manor Verona acquirements." In spite of her resolution, prior to this interview, to hold a poise to match that of a Marthorn, she found herself putting ugly emphasis on the name of the school, and she stared straight at him as if hoping that he would betray some of his family attitude which had humiliated her in the past. "Just a moment, please! Your talk is of business, you say? I will use the hard words and short terms which belong to the subject. Were you told to come to me with a message from your directors?"

"No!"

"What then?"

"I demanded and obtained the right to notify the independents along the river regarding certain projects planned by the Temiscouata people. It's a stretching of their granted privileges. I feel that the deal may prove to be a little raw unless the other folks are properly warned in time to act for their own protection. My stand may seem to be quixotic. My father thought so. I cannot say that the directors agreed with any enthusiasm to let me have my way. But I maintain that the aboveboard principle in all matters is the best policy."

And then, because Clare Kavanagh was not mistress of hypocrisy, but was merely a girl with much unruly

human nature in her, he knew that she was mutely and scornfully telling him that an elopement, a secret marriage, a scandal, and a mystery hardly agreed with his profession of aboveboard principles in all matters. He flushed and shifted his gaze to the fire in the Franklin grate beside her.

She, apparently, found the silence very effective and did not break it. His anger at his own discomposure deepened the color on his face.

He realized more keenly than ever before how much he was at a disadvantage. The impulse of chivalry had started him forth on a mission to protect her and others; but he realized that he must appear to her to be a cheap and smirched and tawdry knight. Her honest, maidenly contempt was apparent

"Miss Kavanagh, I'm in an intolerable position! I know what your looks meant just now when I talked about being aboveboard. I have let the world—even my own family—think what they would about a certain matter! You must understand—"

She interrupted, impatiently. "I take no interest in the matter."

"But you are not giving me a square deal in your mind, Miss Kavanagh! Because you don't understand one matter you're not willing to accept my help in another thing."

She rose suddenly and took two steps toward him. "Mr. Marthorn, I don't care to hear you betray your company's interests."

She started around the table, but he leaped to the door and set his back against it; he was no longer awkward or confused. His face was white.

"I think we may match each other in mutual lack of

interest in each other's private business," he stated, frigidly, meeting her angry eyes with stare as scornful as her own. "But as to the business which concerns the men you're trying to protect, I'm going to say something—and you're going to listen—and you are going to act, or else you'll be a traitor to the X. K. Not one word now, Miss Kavanagh!" She was about to speak and he put up his hand. "Don't you presume to tell me again that I'm betraying the Temiscouata. I'll accept no insults from anybody when I'm on straight business! I'm talking to you because you're in a position to protect interests that are threatened. You go hire the best hydraulic engineer you can find—and get him quickly. You hire a good lawyer. Get those men up here and onto their jobs. Let them come to me for a conference. I am empowered to make compromises. If you will delegate authority to them it will not be necessary for you to wound your feelings by coming into frequent personal contact with me. If you do not discover that I'm doing all this to get an honest deal for all on the river, your wilfulness will be answerable. I give you warning that professionally I am for the Temiscouata! But tell your lawyer to hurry and put injunctions on my operations at Grindstone, at Ebeemah, and at Whirlingstone. Otherwise I may beat you out before the courts can give a final decision on the disputed rights. That's all, Miss Kavanagh! I'm sorry because our conversation strayed outside business bounds for a few moments." He opened the door for her and stood aside. "Good evening!"

She bowed and stepped quickly into the hall; when she was a little way down the corridor she hesitated. But she did not turn her head and, after a moment, went on to her room. When she walked past him he was enter-

taining no more illusions regarding Miss Kavanagh's opinion of him. The excuses that he had made for her before did not apply in this instance. Topics had jostled one another rather rudely during this interview; he stood in the hall and tried to remember just how much of a fool he had been in trying to blurt that confession of that adventure into matrimony. The voice of the accordion minstrel was still raised in song; he was repeating the ballad of Lord Lovell for the delectation of the insistent Mr. Wallin. The minstrel had been apart several times with Mr. Wallin on a mysterious mission and had become very vociferous. Kenneth, in the hall, could hear the words plainly:

“Lord Lovell he came to the cast-tul’s gate,
And they asked of him who was there.
And says he: ‘What ho! I cannot wait,
For I’m come for the Lad-ee Clare.’

“Ow! He was bo-uld as bo-uld could be,
And she was trul-ee fair to see.
She had robes so rare and gold to spare,
And he wanted to wed with the Lad-ee Clare!”

“Bold, eh?” muttered the young man. “He had more courage than good judgment.”

He tramped into the big room to get his pack and to find out what chamber Mr. Dolan had assigned for his lodgment.

“Find her all right, according as I said?” inquired Mr. Pratt, pleasantly. Young Kezar swung around in his chair and regarded Kenneth with venomous expression.

“Yes, sir, and much obliged to you.”

“No thanks needed. I got strict orders from her to-

day to bring straight to her any man who wants to see her on business."

"And that's why she'll be finding you loading onto her all the jewelry peddlers, bums, canvassers, and sculch who come begging their way through this country," remonstrated Kezar, angrily. "Why don't you use your judgment, Pratt, if you have any?"

"I haven't much. So I'll be saving of it. Miss Kavanagh has plenty and to spare—and she's a good judge of when a man is obeying strict orders." He did not point that rebuke by looking at Kezar.

"I have a few orders of my own to give out as field boss of the X. K."

"For instance?" invited Mr. Pratt, meekly.

"I'll do my talking when there are less outsiders standing around sticking their noses into our private business."

Kenneth smiled down into the flaming face of the boss. It was a radiant, discomposing smile. Marthorn smiled in spite of his inward feelings. There was a taunt in the smile. There was the complacent expression of one who had just enjoyed a delightful tête-à-tête. It was a sort of triumph smile. Therefore there was subtle malice in it.

"I'm sorry I can't give you your regular room, Squire Marthorn," boomed Mr. Dolan from his card-table. "That is, unless Boss Kezar is willing to swap with you! He got along first and drew twenty-three."

"Oh, on no account will I disturb Mr. Kezar," declared Kenneth, amiably, going to the hook for his pack. "Undoubtedly Mr. Kezar finds that the room just suits him—twenty-three!" He dwelt with ironic significance on the number which slang has made familiar.

"Any slur in that?" demanded Kezar, with heat.

"Not unless you are over-sensitive and choose to see one." Marthorn was crossing the room and faced about. "Personally I'm in favor of postponing that little matter between us until—well, to some time when I'm not so infernally sleepy," he went on. "I'm sure we shall be able to get together on it very soon. Is putting it off till we can settle it right all agreeable to you?"

"Come along with your business—any time!"

"Thank you so much!" purred Kenneth; then he followed the hired man who preceded with the guiding beacon of a lighted lamp.

Kezar turned on Pratt. "Do you still tell me that you do not know what his business was with Miss Kavanagh?"

"Kindly refer back to what I have already told you and let it stand at that," replied Mr. Pratt, his temper ruffled. "I usually stick to one story, when it's the truth and if my memory is working all right. However, what that cohoot there is singing may have some bearing on the case. He may have inside hints!"

The droning minstrel was in the midst of this verse:

"Lord Lovell he said on his bended knee:

'My love I now declare.

Will you wed with me?' 'Oh yes,' said she,

Then he kissed the Lad-ee Clare."

Kezar, having rage to relieve and picking out what seemed to be a safe object, walked to the singer and snapped fingers under the man's nose

"Quit that lallyloooing!"

The astonished songster choked himself off in the middle of the chorus and, by gesture and mute query in demeanor, referred the matter to his mentor, who was straddling the other end of the bench.

"What in the name of the jumped-up americaneezus do you mean by kicking in on my own private personal music?" demanded Mr. Wallin, holding pose with conducting forefinger upraised.

"He's bawling Miss Kavanagh's name. I won't have any more of it!"

"'S that so?" inquired Mr. Wallin, vinously truculent. "Lemme inform you that my private personal singer is obeying my orders and is singing about Miss Clare P. Tucker, a lady frien' o' mine. I'm Lord Lovell in the song. And you're no frien' of mine. You asked me to waste a perfectly good Indian that I'm saving up." He rose from the bench and hitched the sleeves of his wool jacket up along hairy arms. "Do you think you're going to stop me from hearing Clare P. Tucker sung about in a genteel way?"

"You are insulting Miss Kavanagh. She must be hearing it."

"The Colleen Clare, God bless her noble heart, ain't putting on coats that don't fit her," shouted Wallin. "That's more than I can say for some of her understrappers! You are a—" He broke off suddenly; Clare had stepped into the room. "Beg pardon, marm!" he muttered, pulling down his sleeves.

"You need not do so, warden. You have not offended me—not in any way." Her tone was crisp; she showed the Kavanagh abruptness. "Mr. Dolan, will you be good enough to ask Mr. Marthorn, if he is down before I am in the morning, to wait till I can have a talk with him?"

"Yessum! 'Twill be tended to, Miss Kavanagh."

She thanked him and went away

Slowly, provokingly, tauntingly, triumphantly Mr. Wal-

lin drew his forefinger through the air under Kezar's nose. "Wait till you get the copyright before you try to control *anything!*" he advised. He sat down on the bench. "Now, Seth, pipe 'er up from where you left off."

Wallin, in seating himself, had turned his back on Kezar with utter indifference. The young man exhibited no more belligerency. It was plain that the boss had been subjugated by something more effective than the threat of the warden's fist. He stood and glowered at the door which Clare had closed behind her. The hired man came back from his attendance on Marthorn.

"I want to go to bed, Dolan!"

"And you'll find it a good one, Mr. Kezar! Squire Marthorn says there isn't a better one this side of New York City—and that recommendation from him ought to make you sleep easy in it! Ben! Lamp, towels, and key for Mr. Kezar. Twenty-three for Mr. Kezar."

The boss scowled at the landlord, but Mr. Dolan's broad face gave no hint that he had a sense of humor of his own.

CHAPTER XXII

The meeting of three—the woods triangle of two bucks and one doe; and the doe is the victor.

KENNETH rose earliest of all Dolan's guests, with full intent to be abroad before anybody else was stirring; he was thus able to hurry to the river for his morning plunge, with moccasins on his bare feet and a blanket shrouding his pajamas.

The east was ruddy with the first flush of dawn when he stepped out on the frosty grass. The skies had cleared, the wind had died, and in the morning's vast calm the glow behind the trees was like a fire beneath a grid and was promise that Indian summer was yet to smile benignantly on the country of the Toban.

The river was a polished mirror surface; the eye could not distinguish where land and water joined; the silence was so profound that it claimed attention even as sound might. He strode toward the river, already tingling with anticipation. In spite of the indifferent success of the evening before, he was not downcast. One could not be discouraged when looking up into the glow of a morning like that.

Mr. Dolan hailed him from the door of the storehouse, where the early-bird landlord was slicing ham. Kenneth stopped at the door and leaned in, his hands clutching the low lintel, inhaling the aroma of the smoked flesh. Mr.

Dolan did not suspend operations; savory slice after slice he laid over with his keen knife. "Message! Miss Kavanagh wants to see you before you leave this morning."

"She does? How do you know?"

"Came down last evening and told me so with her own mouth. Let me say a word about this ham! It's cob-smoked and I—"

"But what did she say?"

"I told you what she said. That's all. This ham—"

"Never mind about telling me. Fry me a piece as big as a rug and I'll eat it. Some appetite this morning, Dolan!"

He ran toward the river; the canoe-shed shut off view from the tavern. He threw blanket and pajamas upon a post and dove from the end of the landing-float. He swam far out, splashing gloriously in the middle of the river, returning with a paddle-wheel over-arm that had won him a silver cup at the Nestor pool contests. The waves which followed him to the shore broke the thin margin ice with tinklings like fairy bells.

"It's a matter of taste, as the feller said when the bumblebee stung him on the tongue," Mr. Dolan informed the admiring hired man. "I like ice-water well enough as a drink—but there I stop."

He sighed, squinted along the knife, and marked an extra width for the next slice of ham after he had watched Kenneth run back to the tavern. "After that slosh to the middle of the river and back this hunk will be about his size," he said. "But what I lose on him I'll make up on Jesse Wallin. He's eating gin for all three meals right now."

When Kenneth, radiant and ruddy, stepped forth again into the morning, Donald Kezar was pacing the narrow

porch, with the air of a man who was on sentry-go and proposed to attend strictly to business.

Gossip had given Kenneth only a vague idea of Donald Kezar; he knew the fellow was more or less of a border rowdy with a hankering to stir trouble. Kenneth had not made overmuch out of the affair at the church in Ste. Agathe except to remember that a fellow had wanted to start a fight between the X. K. men and the Temiscouata employees; the fellow had some connection with the X. K. It was in Kenneth's mind to hold him to account for that lie which had presented the son of Stephen Marthorn in such hateful light; but he was willing to make allowances for a rowdy's bumptiousness. However, all at once, he found himself speculating on what this upstanding young chap might mean to Clare, besides being her field boss.

Kenneth had stepped off the porch and was walking briskly to and fro on the sward in the sunlight. Under the impulse of his new curiosity, he stopped and stared at Donald. The fellow did not really seem to be of that class to which Kenneth's slighting consideration had relegated him.

He was evidently not an ordinary woodsman. Kenneth remembered that somebody had said that Kezar's grandfather had long been John Kavanagh's closest friend.

He found that Kezar was returning his stare with a particular amount of interest.

All at once the affair at the church on the day of the Kavanagh funeral, an affair which Kenneth, in his aversion for grudges, had half put out of his mind, recurred in all its hatefulness and began to sting his memory poignantly. It assumed a new aspect, a new importance. Sudden impulse forced Kenneth to the rail of the porch.

He leaned on it and spoke in low tones. "We seem to produce a most unpleasant effect on each other. Do you mind explaining to me, if you have any definite notion, what it's all about?"

Marthorn's rather languid, teasing manner silenced Kezar more effectually than any threats. He walked away. The city man was evidently inviting a contest of wits and tongues, and Kezar knew his own deficiencies. He muttered something about making no talk.

"I'm sorry for that. I have no definite notion of my own about the thing. I can't explain it to myself. I really hoped you might know, seeing that you disliked me enough at our first meeting to tell Miss Kavanagh and her assembled friends a most barefaced whopper of a lie about me. Have you ever confessed to her or to anybody that you lied about me?"

He began with sardonic drawl. He finished, speaking sharply and angrily. He developed passion while he talked and he was rather surprised to find that he had been harboring such unsuspected rancor.

Kezar did not speak or turn his head; he stood at the end of the porch.

"Don't you hear what I'm asking you?"

He began to distrust his self-control while he waited for a reply; that broad back which was turned indifferently invited assault.

He found a double pleasure in Clare Kavanagh's appearance at that moment; her presence gave him joy; she enabled him to control himself in the matter of Kezar. Her placid face gave no hint that she had heard anything out of the way or perceived any menace in the situation.

"We will stroll about for a few minutes while we talk, Mr. Marthorn."

"If it's anything private I'll go away," proffered the field boss, and her expression told Kenneth that this blundering way of meeting her tactfulness in eliminating a listener had irritated her.

"It is not necessary for you to go away, Donald!" She swung off with a bit of assurance in her stride and Kenneth marched beside her.

"I want to talk with you this morning in the open—out of doors, sir. Somehow I seem to see more clearly—feel freer—judge more competently when I am out of doors." She smiled. "I'm going to ask you to explain that matter to me just as you had planned to do. I have thought the thing over and I'm afraid the little tavern sitting-room rather cramped my perception and narrowed my views."

"I wanted to talk with you there. It seemed more—more sociable," confessed Kenneth.

"But it's out here that I hope and believe I'll be able to take a broader estimate," she said, her gesture indicating sky and forest. "Last night in that little room I was undoubtedly an opinionated young woman who allowed her personal prejudices to stand in front of what may be the true interests of my company. Mr. Marthorn, I'm ready, out here, to represent my men instead of myself."

"I'll state conditions as frankly and fully as I am justified by my understanding with the Temiscouata folks." With that preface, pointedly spoken, he went into earnest and rapid exposition of the situation and the prospects along the Toban. She did not interrupt him nor did she express any doubts after he had finished.

"Thank God for His outdoors, Mr. Marthorn!" she cried. "It's the place for talk when one wants to be

honest and believe in honesty! I take what you have given me for my help! I am grateful." She put out her hand and grasped his.

"So now you understand why you must have a good lawyer and a mighty capable engineer, especially the last. I can co-operate with the right man. Let us agree now to compromise, you and I, in so far as we are able."

"How far will the Temiscouata folks allow you to go? You must pardon me, but I failed to see, yesterday, any indication that they are willing to give the X. K. a show."

"They must allow me to go as far as the right can go with me! I propose to be conservative and work for mutual best interests. When the Temiscouata directors fail to stand behind me they will be butting against what's right, and I have the courage to stand up and tell 'em so. I'll frankly confess that my position does seem to be anomalous, but here is an opportunity for you and me to show some of the other folks that we can bring new times and better policy to the river."

She flushed slightly when he pleaded so warmly for association with her.

"I certainly do promise to keep pace with you in doing what's right, Mr. Marthorn."

The girl became aware that Kenneth Marthorn was admiring her in most cordial fashion; her father had always declared that the Kavanaghs did not lie to themselves. Quite frankly and open-eyed she looked at the young man and did not lose her composure. Her vanity was stirred no more than her poise. For was not this young adventurer the ever-ready love-maker, the cad in pursuit of women, the complacent conqueror of hearts? She felt mordant inclination to advise him to go and flirt

with Dame Elisiane or even with one of Dolan's cows, if he felt that he really needed to keep in the pink of amatory condition in the woods.

In spite of her new respect for his chivalry in affairs of business, she knew that contempt was stirring in her. He could not honestly offer love. This was his philandering nature which he could not hold in check! Therefore his transitory notice was not merely not flattering—it was insulting. She turned away lest revelation of her scorn should prejudice the X. K. interests.

She called to Donald and he started to come to them, kicking little obstructions viciously.

"I'm going to do everything I can, Mr. Marthorn, to show you that I intend to meet you half-way in what you have proposed. I think you know that Mr. Kezar is my most trusted friend." Kezar was still some distance away.

"I have been wondering just—" He stopped suddenly as a man checks himself when he finds that he is revealing hidden thoughts by speech.

"I regard Donald Kezar very highly!" Her pride prompted her to make that statement. She desired to avoid any open rupture which must result if Marthorn ever ventured farther with questionable attentions. Those attentions could be only the humiliating jestings with love with which impressionable men amuse themselves. "I am giving him charge of most of my affairs."

Donald, black-visaged with sullen ire, came and stood beside her.

"Mr. Marthorn, in as few words as possible run over to Mr. Kezar the suggestions you have made to me. I can answer for Donald's fidelity and I promise that he will make no talk."

Kenneth hesitated.

"I ask," she added, "so that Donald will understand why I am giving him certain orders; and when you hear me give him those orders you will know that I am resolved to go ahead just as you have suggested."

"I am at your service, Miss Kavanagh!" He stood very straight. He leveled challenging and hostile gaze at Kezar. He did not speak at once. All of a sudden the principles of this modern knight errant had been put to the test and he found his chivalry engaged in a stiff fight with his plain, ordinary, and rather vulgar human nature. The girl had actually flaunted an accepted lover in his face—it did seem like that. He hated to admit that he was propped on the same old pedestal which serves for most men—self-interest. All ardor was quenched in him. The girl did not value him, it seemed. His suspicions were roused. This looked like cold-blooded and calculating determination to use him for the benefit of the X. K. He was having hard work to hold himself from telling her and Donald Kezar to go to the devil. She had seemed to be so alone—so unprotected! Desire to shield her had appealed to him like a holy sentiment. But now that she had called this man into the conference, after such suggestive preface, Kenneth felt as if a league had been formed and that he ought to be protecting himself. In his confusion he was not thinking clearly.

Promptly Mr. Marthorn put on enough cold politeness and frigid reserve to suit even Miss Kavanagh's maidenly prejudices. In fact, she was not quite as much pleased with her success as she expected to be. Mr. Marthorn, with his pride in arms, was extremely forbidding as a possible coadjutor. He seemed to have guessed at something which had aroused his contempt. She was inwardly

abashed, for she was not sure that her suspicions were treating him fairly.

All at once he realized that the silence had been prolonged. "I beg your pardon! It's this way, Mr. Kezar." He did not take the field boss into his confidence as to motives. It was terse, plain statement regarding the advantages of a compromise between the rival interests on the river. Mr. Marthorn did not compliment Mr. Kezar to the extent of making any explanations. Mr. Kezar broke in to demand something in that line.

Mr. Marthorn replied stiffly that he could not go into any further details at that time. "Miss Kavanagh, I think, understands that phase of the matter. We have talked it over."

The intimation that there was a confidence between them in which he could not share, and Marthorn's manner when he refused to give information, put teeth into the rage which Kezar had been developing.

"I don't take any stock in the thing!"

"I have not asked for any comments, Donald. Please listen to anything else Mr. Marthorn has to say."

"But we may as well trig it right where it stands," insisted the boss. "It's fishy! They don't mean what they say. It's to tole us on. If he has made you believe in their promises by talking to you, I don't want to hear any more of his talk. He has fooled you. But he can't fool me. I'm awake."

Kenneth bowed and walked away.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Marthorn," pleaded Clare. "Donald, you must apologize for your rudeness."

"I don't believe in doing business with gloves on! They're trying to put something over and I have seen through it. You heard him—he won't talk to me. He

has taken advantage of you because you don't understand the river."

"The reason why I do not talk to you is because words can't handle the situation after the remarks you have just made," stated Kenneth, who had stopped and turned. "To handle it in the obvious way is quite impossible just now."

"You listen to what I tell you to do, Donald! I called you over here so that Mr. Marthorn might hear! Start down-river just as soon as you have finished breakfast. Consult with your grandfather and then go to town and secure the best lawyer and the best engineer you can hire. I hope that doesn't sound vague, Mr. Marthorn! But I can't give Donald more explicit directions; my father never meddled with lawyers and had no use for an engineer. I can only send Donald searching."

"And I cannot ask for better assurances than those you have given me."

Young Kezar looked up the river and down the river; he was ordered to sever himself from her. Co-operation with Marthorn!

"It's a put-up job on you! They talked it over when you left yesterday and sent him chasing after you. He's going to blind you so that you won't notice the dirty work."

Kenneth came strolling back, moving very slowly. "You are rather reckless with your tongue, Kezar! Is it possible that you have been getting by all these years without learning your lesson?"

"Mind your manners, Donald!" cried Clare, in her excitement unconsciously quoting her father. "You are shaming me and disgracing yourself."

"I'm standing up for your interests against the whole

pack of grafters, dudes, and lying muckers the Temiscouata can send along. You don't need to send me down-country after a lawyer and a fiddle-diddle engineer. They're no good—none of them! Let me go north with you and stand guard over the dams and outlets with a forty-four-seventy rifle. Then let 'em come on!"

While Kezar waved his arms and stamped about Kenneth was developing sinister emotions behind the mask of his pale face.

"They go to school down-country to learn how to be cheats," insisted the boss. "All so polite! But they're cheats. I know how to be square and honest even if I haven't been to school all my life." He forgot the formality he had assumed before others. "I tell you, Clare, you've got to stick to your own kind up here, if you want to find honest men. You mustn't believe a word that any man from the Temiscouata bunch tells you."

Clare had been protesting ineffectually during the tirade. The boss avoided her gaze, threw himself to and fro, and cracked his fingers over his head.

"He's only a slick one—come here to put something over. That's what they have schools for nowadays—to train the slick ones."

Kenneth suddenly dove at one of the waving arms and brought it around behind the unsuspecting Kezar's back with the wrist-twist and the jiu-jitsu arm-lock and shoulder-wrench; it is a position where a pinioned giant who ventures to struggle merely uses his own strength to injure himself, and the excruciating pain forces surrender.

"That's something else I learned in school! Move and I'll snap your arm."

Kezar had attempted desperate resistance, but he groaned and grimaced in agony.

"You lied to Miss Kavanagh about me on the day of the funeral. Now you tell her—"

"Mr. Marthorn!" She stepped close to him. She spoke low with neither entreaty nor command. Her tone was frigidly polite. "Mr. Marthorn!"

Kenneth turned from Kezar, but did not release his grip. She reached between the two men and touched lightly the sinewy hand which clutched the contorted wrist. Marthorn relaxed his hold immediately; red replaced pallor in his cheeks.

"I wanted to make this man own up!"

"It is entirely unnecessary, sir."

Her face gave him no clue, it was without expression; in the confusion of his emotions he did not understand exactly.

"To have him lie about me—to have you think that I would—" he stammered.

"I understood you that day—after a painful moment when I was not myself. It hurts me, sir. I have been sorry ever since. Please let us forget it." She turned abruptly from him. "Donald, after all the warnings I have given you, you have just humiliated me again. No! Don't you speak!"

"Perhaps you wish me to step aside," suggested Kenneth, meekly.

"No, I want you to stay. There must be no misunderstanding—no suspicion as to what the X. K. wants to do. Donald, here is a letter for your grandfather in regard to what I have said. Here is a copy for you, Mr. Marthorn."

"I'm trying my best to do what's right in your interests," ventured Kezar, putting the letter into his pocket.

"You are to do exactly what I tell you to do, after this!" She spoke with the Kavanagh curtness. "Get

away as soon as you can and see how quickly you can have those men up here!"

All three of them were glad and relieved because there was, at that moment, a good and sufficient excuse to separate; Mr. Dolan furnished it; he came out on the porch and banged the breakfast call on his home-made sheet-iron gong.

CHAPTER XXIII

Noel voices the word of Fate and raises bleeding hands under the evening sky, invoking the great Pamola.

DONALD KEZAR carried away from Dolan's House not only that letter of instructions, but he carried as well a savage determination which threatened to negative the spirit of loyalty imposed by those instructions.

He swore to himself that he would never allow Clare Kavanagh and Kenneth Marthorn to carry out any plans of co-operation. That new understanding which seemed to be developing between those two who should be foes had frightened Donald as much as it had angered him.

So he stood in the brick office in the village of Ste. Agathe and, as usual, when he wanted to expend his fury vicariously he raved at the cowering grandfather.

"But you must please her—always please her. Please her in little ways as well as big ways," whined the old man, whenever Donald choked with rage and paused for breath.

But reiteration of that advice had no soothing effect. "You can please a woman by letting her use you for a door-mat! That's what I've been doing. It gets me nothing—it gets me nowhere. She is too almighty well pleased. Things are going too smooth for her. I've got her word on it! I have been telling you! What's the matter with your hearing? She says she won't get mar-

ried till she finds she can't run her business. By Judas! it's time for us to get busy down here and trig some of it!"

Old Figger-four writhed on his stool and cracked his knuckles. He thought upon his own humble efforts to win the favor of the girl—the flowers, the gifts, the wampum. Almost unconsciously he reached for a piece of paper. He remembered his bargain with Noel the Bear. "You must please her—always please her!" he mumbled.

"Don't say that to me again! Just now that damn' pup of the Marthorn litter seems to be beating everybody else to the 'please' proposition!"

"But he's sneaking around to hurt her. You warned her—"

"I knew I was lying when I said it to her!" His anger forced honesty in his confession. He beat his fist on the desk and cursed the name of Marthorn with hideous obscenity. And then, his tones breaking in his passion, he added: "But he isn't what I said he is! I've got to face it, grands'r! It's the way he looks at you! He backs me down when he looks at me. He's got something in him that I haven't got in me. I don't know what it is. And she is seeing it, too. All at once she'll forget to hate him. I know what men mean when they look at a girl in a certain way. He's making his play for her."

"But she picked you to be with her! You have been up there and have had your chance! I tell you she'll always hate the Marthorns."

"But here's a Marthorn stepping out of his bunch, double-crossing his own company so as to make good with her. She is only human. If his deal goes through she'll fall for him."

However, the old man, trembling, working his fingers, fumbling about his desk, persisted in his hopes. "She is

shrewd. Old John's blood and wit are in her. She'll fool young Marthorn along. She'll use him and toss him back in old Steve's face. It's her way of getting even with the family. Please her—keep on pleasing her! You're on the inside. She likes you best of all. Why, she must have said something to somebody," he hastened on. "It's the gossip that you and she are going to be married right away."

"Who said so?" Donald showed acute interest.

"I don't know as it was any special one—this one more than that," faltered old Kezar. "But it certainly has been mentioned to me—and somebody was talking of having a present all ready. And nobody would be talking that way unless it was considered as pretty well settled." He was eager and sincere in spite of his vagueness. He wished he had asked old Noel more questions. He knew that the taciturn Indian was not given to gossip or guesswork. It would be a good idea to find out what the chief did know. And there was the promise! There was the wampum! It would be another service that would please Clare. He dipped a pen.

"If you can find anybody who can give me a tip on how I stand, show him to me."

"I'm pretty sure I can—when I think! I'll try." The grands'r was not ready to own up that he was depending on an Indian. But he was anxious to placate Donald. The young man's imprecations and threats and his rage had been almost too much for an old man's nerves.

"I'm not going to start for the city until we have planned the thing—until we get a line on the whole proposition."

"But this letter to me—she expects you to hurry!"

"Yes! Blah-h! Taking orders from young Marthorn.

I tell you I'm going to stay here till I have done some figuring. She expects us to get the right kind of a lawyer and the right kind of an engineer. That's the tone of the letter, isn't it?" he asked, with sardonic twist of his mouth. "Well, I propose to make sure that they *are* the right kind before I hire them. I'll do a little inquiring and you do a little remembering; we'll probably be able to find the *right* sort." His emphasis on the word "right" was maliciously significant.

"But we mustn't hurt the X. K., Donnie!"

"Do you think I'm going to hand Marthorn a couple of men he can use to smash my prospects, the same as I'd step up to him and give him two clubs to use on me? I'm not working for the X. K. just now! I'm working for myself, and I need a lot of your help. I see you have a letter to write! I won't bother you. I'll take a walk and do some thinking."

The ink on the poised pen was dry. When Donald slammed the door the old man dipped again and told Noel the Bear, through Lola Hébert, that Donald was down to Ste. Agathe for a few days. Abner Kezar urged the Indian to hurry.

The Feast of the Maize was no mere curtailed festival; it was a holiday season of happy days and merry nights in the settlement at the foot of the Nubble of Telos. Men and women, youths and maidens, put off commonplace clothing and wore the beaded skins and the dyed feathers of the tribal costumes which were laid away in the cedar chests for the rest of the year. The old laws were taken from the leather bag and promulgated anew. There were the dances and the plays—the play of the hunt, of the wedding, of the war trail, and all the rest. And there was the day when Lola Nicola Hébert stood

above the heads of the people, in a niche in the hornblende cliff of Telos, and was proclaimed princess of the Melliticites. The regal head-dress which old Noel kept cached in a cave at the foot of Telos was brought forth and set upon her dark hair; she was given the staff and the sacred tokens; she swore the oath. Old Noel smiled when he saw the joy with which she was received. He had reckoned on it. He was building for the future. He had faith that the tribal loyalty which had been lukewarm under the rule of a centenarian would respond to the more romantic influence of a handsome girl.

But Lola sighed with relief when they took off the head-dress and she was glad when she was permitted to wash from her forehead and her cheeks the delicate stripings and the scrolls which the medicine-man had painted there with narrow brush of moose-hair dipped in the juices of herbs and berries. It was all over! The festival was ended. They could go back to the river—to the pathway her hopes glorified for her.

On the trail a messenger met them, the son of Mitch Polysusep, bringing the letter from Abner Kezar. Lola read its few lines, the color flaming into her cheeks. "He is at Sainte Agathe!" she whispered when old Noel bent ear to her mouth at her signal. "It's from the grandfather. He says to hurry."

The chief turned from her radiant face and put hand to his breast, feeling the sacred wampum, the last few strings of the old heritage, hanging from his neck under his shirt. The bargain had been ratified; he was the debtor; he must pay. But there was somber sorrow in him; he had been thinking much, through the days and the nights of the festival. Was he buying for her with his sacred wampum the sorrow of an awakening? However, there

was man's oath, there was woman's beauty. Might he not hope that they would prevail? It seemed to old Noel, as he plodded on, that he had never seen the girl appear so lovely. How could a husband turn from her after she had put father and mother aside for his sake?

"Hurry," the letter had said.

Perhaps that meant that Donald had asked for that word in the letter. Was it not likely that the grandfather had mentioned the name of Noel in spite of a promise to keep silent? White men were very careless about keeping their word to Indians! Noel, in his simplicity, strove to make augury that would hearten him, he needed to be comforted.

He would hurry. He would fulfil his promise to her; he had told her that they would go to find her husband and had predicted that Donald would love her when his eyes saw her.

So, in order to hurry, he asked them to bring out the sachem-canoe at Olammun landing; it was a big canoe with places for four. He did not need to ask for volunteers to man the paddles of bow and stern, Dunos and Peter Francis, the brothers, distant kin of Lola through Noel, insisted and were preferred.

Up the river reaches went the sachem-canoe, the paddles flashing, the hurrying bow bursting foam-bells. And at last they lifted ashore at Ste. Agathe—and on the sand of the narrow beach the old Indian and the girl stood looking at each other. Their hesitation confessed the pitiful inadequacy they felt. They shrank from the actual testing of their hopes. After a time he put out his hand to her and led her away from the shore.

"I'll go. Tell him you have come. Mebbe best," he suggested.

"Yes, *grandpère*! That is best. It might trouble him to have me come upon him suddenly. You explain to him. I will do just as he tells me to do." She gazed around her, seeking some sort of sanctuary, a bit bewildered and plainly ill at ease in the unwonted atmosphere of a village, with its squalling mills and its stores and its strolling inhabitants. "I'll go to the porch of the church on the hill, *grandpère*. It seems quiet up there. And I can be saying a bit of a prayer while I'm waiting. I know he will come to me when he hears that I haven't any home any more. Make him understand that I have come to him because I had to come. I hope he won't be angry when you tell him."

"Most like be glad. Hope so. Yes, mebbe so!" declared old Noel, clinging as long as possible to his self-imposed illusions. Now that he was on the ground he dreaded to touch with investigation a veil behind which might lurk truth which was ugly. The nearer he approached to Donald Kezar the keen instinct of the savage informed Noel that he had undertaken the impossible. He watched the girl till she was half-way up the hill and then he trudged to the Kavanagh office. There were men at the wicket and he waited till they had finished their business with Abner Kezar and had gone out. Then he went and pushed a string of wampum across the desk. "Owe it. Pay now!"

"So you got the letter all right, eh?" The chief had nerved himself to an ordeal and wanted to get it over with.

"Just a word with me before you see Donald. I want to ask you where you got the hint that he is going to be married. Is it talked about quite a lot?"

"Mebbe." Noel's composure was not disturbed. He

had dropped his hint as to a wedding-gift in the way of grim jest.

"You're no blab-mouth, Noel! I know you must have heard something pretty straight. Have you heard that Miss Kavanagh has said anything about Donald?"

The chief's jaws sagged and quivered. "How Miss Kavanagh?"

"Why, wasn't that what you meant when you spoke about giving the boy a present?"

"Him marry Miss Kavanagh?" It was some time before Noel spoke and the words seemed to tear his throat.

"Probably. That's the arrangement as far as it has gone," said the grandfather, resolved not to drop his air of assurance before this peering Indian. "Look here, if you can trace that hint back to Miss Kavanagh, I'll hand you ten dollars, Noel. Now how did you know anything about such a prospect, anyway?"

"Me tell *him* first. Then mebbe him tell *you*!"

Abner Kezar had been so often the victim of Donald's blustering moods that the Indian's caution appeared understandable. "I guess it's the best way, chief. He gets peppery if he thinks anybody is interfering with his business."

"Him where?"

"In the house. Go knock on the door."

Noel walked between the rows of the garden's withered herbage and clacked bony knuckles on the door panel. The housekeeper admitted him. He walked in past the old woman while she was expostulating; she was explaining that Mr. Donald was very busy, getting ready to go away.

"Must see!" announced Noel, and he spoke so loudly that his voice called the young man into the hallway.

"In here! Come in here! I'll see you," was the host's hasty invitation. And when he had closed the door he urged, sullenly, yet anxiously: "Now, no foolishness! Speak low. Just a minute! I suppose it's about Lola! Now I'll 'tend to all that very soon, Noel. Look there!" He pointed to a leather traveling-bag which lay open on the bed. "I'm starting for the city on important business. You go tell her. Say that I'll be back pretty soon and everything will be fixed up right. Understand?"

The chief shook his head.

"What do you mean?" asked Kezar, with anger. "I've just given you plain words."

"Huh! Words! What more?"

"That's enough—my word—till I can get back and straighten things out."

"Word to me not enough! You go tell her."

"Good blazes! I'm packing up! I'm taking the down train. I haven't any time to go to her. Tell her to rest easy." He tried to hide his anger and to affect sincerity, but he was not very successful.

"Can see her quick. She's here!" Under the Indian's searching gaze the young man's looks betrayed his thoughts more eloquently than words; it was certainly not the demeanor of an expectant lover or a delighted husband.

"Here? Where?"

The window of the room commanded a view of the church on the hill. Noel contented himself with pointing. It was a long way to the church, but in that little blur of buff under the porch the old Indian evoked visible sign that he had spoken the truth. Kezar turned from the window with fury.

"How the hell does that girl dare to come up here after what I have told her? You ought to have stopped her."

"She no blame. Me brought her," stated Noel, bravely, eager to assume all the burden.

"You take her back. At once!"

"After you go talk—mebbe!"

"I'm not going up there to talk. I can't go. It won't do. It 'll start all kinds of gossip."

"She come here to house, eh?"

"Damnation! Of course not! What's the matter with you two?"

"Then you don't take her for your wife?" asked the Indian, bluntly, plunging straight at the dreaded truth.

But Kezar, though he opened his mouth to declare himself in regard to that marriage, managed to get his passion under partial control. He could not afford to light the fuse of a dangerous bomb at that moment and leave it burning while he was absent from the Toban. "That's her business and mine, and she and I will settle it at the right time."

Noel struck fists against his breast. "My business now."

"Looks to me as if every Indian in this section is making it his business. Where do you fit in?"

"To me you swore."

"Let it go at that. She and I will look after the rest of it."

"Go and tell her."

"I can't—I won't—I haven't the time."

"You see her there! No home. Has left it. You take her."

"Left her home? Has run away? She must go back

and keep still, tell her. They'll take her back. I'll explain later to her. You must get her out of this village at once, Noel."

"You call her your wife?"

"I call her nothing—not now, till things are straightened out."

"Then I say, 'My business!'"

"It would be a fine thing in this country if ministers who had hitched up folks went running around afterward, butting in!"

"Not know about ministers. Not care. But to me—the chief—you gave the Big Word." He put proud and solemn stress on his name for the Mellicite oath: "Man with squaw—it's bad! But man with man," he pounded his breast, "you pay!"

Neither of them spoke for a long time after that declaration.

"You mean to say that you'll force me to take that girl, here and now, and say she's my wife?"

"No."

"What are you driving at, then?"

The old chief suddenly put away pride and stolidity. "Me poor man. Have few words for saying," he confessed, stammering in his anxious earnestness. "But yourself—in here," he laid scrawny hand across his heart, "don't it tell you?"

Donald gave the pleader only blank and discouraging stare.

"You have tell me—have tell her—how much you love. Not any more, eh, in here?"

"Oh, that's another matter—that's all right," hedged the young man.

"You go tell her, eh, it's all right?"

Donald shook his head and turned away, busying himself with his packing.

"Then it's not all right. You have talk so much to me—to her! But now not walk few steps, eh, to make her want to keep on living?" In his anguish he burst the thralls of speech to which his poor knowledge of the white man's tongue usually confined him. He forced into his plea some of the imagery of the Mellicite tongue. "Up there is poor White Lily. You found White Lily all pure in little pool what was her home. You took sweet smell; you bruised and you crushed. And now White Lily is pulled up from pool. She droops and she fades. You can save her by putting her in your home. But do you break the stalk and throw White Lily away?"

This outburst from the Indian astonished Kezar, who had but little knowledge of the poetry of thought which the taciturnity of the red man so often conceals. But he was not won over to decency. His face remained hard and he went on stubbornly with his packing.

Many minutes old Noel waited, trembling after his appeal, wiping tears from his wrinkled cheeks with the flat of his hand.

A locomotive whistle hooted, warning that the down train would soon leave the station.

"You hear that, Noel! It means that I've got to go. It's the last train down for the day!"

"*Now* you go! But *once*, when you follow her and beg, you not go!"

"Tell her to be good and wait till I come back."

"And then?"

"I tell you it will be her business and mine. You keep out." He was locking the bag.

The chief went to him and touched him on the arm. "Too much talk!"

"You're right. I've had enough of it."

"So you come back and do what was your word to me. Me wait. Or mebbe she die. Then me take what you owe to Mellicite sachem."

"I owe you what?"

"The life what is then no good to her!" He stepped back and folded his arms.

It was echo of what Sabatis had threatened! But the threat of the young Indian had, somehow, lacked the baleful menace of the declaration of the solemn old chief who stood there, his head almost touching the low ceiling, a portentous statue of Fate. The young man stared up at the seamed face and into the deep-sunken eyes, and a quiver of dread shook him. This was an Indian who was obsessed by the fetishism of an oath given to him as chief of the tribe; it was an Indian who was so old that his span of years linked the old savagery in vengeance with a new affront of the present. Here was danger. This old man with his single viewpoint could not be reasoned with nor bluffed.

Kezar fell back on his coward's method of postponing reckonings. "I don't want any trouble with you, Noel. I'll come back. I'll square things."

But the chief was not deceived. "You are lying. You do not *speak* truth—but for words, no matter! You come back. You *act* truth. So you shall save yourself."

"It will have to stand that way for the present, Noel. I'll fix things. Tell her I'm sorry I didn't have time to see her."

"*You* go lie to poor White Lily. Don't ask me to lie!"

growled the chief. He peered through the window at the blur of buff under the church porch and choked.

The situation had got beyond the young man's control. He was afraid and he was desperate. He grabbed his bag and started for the door. "I've a little business at the office—I've got to catch that train. Be sensible and tell her to be so, too."

After Kezar was gone Noel stalked slowly from the house; he knew it was useless to entreat any further, though he realized with misery that he had no comfort which he could carry up to the stricken girl, waiting and hoping and weeping. He stood for a time in Abner's garden, looking down on the dried haws, on the frost-killed flowers, on the few hardy blooms which still strove to live. He wagged his head and muttered, as if he saw symbols there. He remained in meditation till the barking exhausts from the engine stack announced that the train was off. He raised his eyes to find that the dusk was deepening.

At the gate of the garden, as he went forth to the highway, he saw a tall sachem-plume with dry and thorny burs. He plucked double handfuls and crushed them in his palms. Then he slowly stretched his bleeding hands above his head and raised his eyes to the star of the evening skies and whispered a prayer to great Pamola.

Pamola is the god of vengeance of all the tribes which once made up the great Abnaki race.

CHAPTER XXIV

Father Laflamme, aiming at consolation, shoots his arrows so far that he is astonished and troubled.

SO they sat long in the darkness on the porch of the church, sat in silence and stared out into the night.

Lola Hébert had lost her illusions.

Old Noel had lost his hopes.

They who had set forth so bravely to search for happiness had found something so woeful, so terrible, so beyond all their poor strength, that words between them only led to helpless and piteous queries, one of the other. They were not able to answer. Words pricked their grief; they remained silent.

She had no one else except old Noel to advise her. He confessed with sorrow that he could not advise.

When Noel had tried to comfort her with the blossoms of promises which Donald had left behind, the girl merely brushed them from off that hard and cruel truth, and she was not comforted.

Remorse tortured the old man; what he had done had worked so for her immeasurable hurt that he did not dare to plan further for her or meddle with what was beyond his power; he had exacted the oath, but the oath had failed to bind them. What had bound them was gone. He knew that he could not restore it. It concerned the

mysteries of love, and old Noel was not versed in such. And that way lay her dire need!

He dragged his bleeding palms across his rough garments, stirring again the sting of the needles of the burs. He wanted to think upon something besides the ache in his heart. What could he do for her real help? Nothing. He could not give back to her a husband. However, according to his ability, he must serve her. The night was dragging on and the cold mists were rising from the river.

"We go home—home to *père* and *mère*."

"No, I'll not go home."

"But you not be 'fraid. Me lie. Help you. Say me grab you—take you to Telos. 'Huh! old, crazy Indian!' say *Père Onésime*. He kick me out. That's all!"

"No, I'll not go home. His tongue—the farmer, *Bisson*! No!"

"Where go?" he pleaded, and the tone in which he asked was confession of his sense of helplessness and of his surrender.

"I don't know."

And, after that mournful question and the dolorous answer, the child of a hundred and two and the child of seventeen were silent again, sitting side by side on the feet-gouged steps.

There Father Laflamme spied them when he came up the hill and trudged past the church porch, his blinking little lantern lighting his way. He was coming from the death-bed and under his arm he carried pyx and chrism vessel. He greeted Noel in kindly and half-humorous fashion with the few words of the Mellicite tongue he had learned from Noel himself. He put forth his hand with frank cordiality when he questioned and found out who the girl was.

"And you were waiting here to see me?"

She shook her head.

Noel, dreading questions and feeling that he would not dare to lie to a good priest, backed away from the lantern's glow. "We go. Come, Lola. Good night!"

"Go? Where are you going at this time of night?"

"Not know," owned up the Indian, truth-hypnotized in the presence of the holy man. "But must go. Come, Lola!"

"Here! Here!" protested Father Laflamme. "I think I must hear a bit more about this! I find you here on the steps—"

He put out his arm and gently stayed the girl when she started to leave.

"We did not mean to do any wrong, *bon curé*," said Lola, meekly. "We sat here to talk—to rest."

"No, no! That's not what I meant you to think! If you had no better place to rest you should have knocked at the door and Dame Barbe would have let you sit by the fire." He picked up the lantern which he had set on the ground when he had greeted them. "Come, now! Both of you."

"Must go," insisted old Noel.

"Where? I ask you again!"

"Not know," replied the Indian, unable to shade the bitter truth.

"No more nonsense! Into the house with you."

"House good for her!" assented Noel. "She need place for sleep. Good night! Sachem-canoe good house—good enough for sleep." He strode away.

"Old folks are notional and must have their own way to be happy; but young folks do well to listen to friendly advice. Come, daughter! Dame Barbe is always very

kind to young girls. She will look after you." Lola followed when he led the way.

The priest did not question his guest when they were within; he did not even ask her whether she had eaten. He chatted on while Dame Barbe hospitably fixed a chair beside the fire and cared for the buckskin sack.

"And now, Dame Barbe, our suppers. In the house of grief where I have been we could not eat."

He put on his rusty old house cassock and his biretta and sat with Lola at the fire and talked to her without suggesting by any disquieting hint that he took interest in her personal affairs; that attitude so comforted and reassured her that, when the food came smoking to the table, the healthy hunger of youth asserted itself over sorrow.

Again they sat by the fire while Dame Barbe washed her dishes and huskily purred her bit of a *chansonnette* with the bland unction of a well-fed grimalkin. Still Father Laflamme chatted on as if there were no trouble in the world, though all the sympathy of his nature was stirred when every now and then he saw the red lips droop and quiver and the eyes wink away the tears.

"If I do not talk on the matters which may interest a *demoiselle*, you must ask me questions," he said, after a time. But she shook her head.

"And as soon as you are sleepy Dame Barbe will take you with her to the upper room. She understands how to lay a bed so well that nightmares never come there to gallop."

"I can't sleep!" She declared it with despair.

He did not look at her, but stared steadily into the fire, his head turned away from her. The old housekeeper came at his call and shaded the lamp. "The firelight

serves well and the lamp-glare spoils it." He did not speak again for a long time. When he did it was in a low, soothing tone and still he did not glance in her direction.

"It is well for the young to bear always in mind that all the old were young once. There are trials and sorrows in youth; the old have had them. And the old can sometimes help the young who do not know the lessons the old have learned. I do not speak of myself as having much knowledge or wit or power, my daughter, but many of those who have come to me with their burdens have been generous to my sympathy and have said that they drew comfort from it. I, too, have found it hard to sleep when I was young. But I have slept after I told my troubles when I have found a friend who would listen. I am pleased when the young consider me as a friend."

"You are a good man! I know it! You have given me much already."

"Let me give you sympathy—understanding sympathy—in your sorrow, whatever it may be, my daughter! Then in Dame Barbe's bed you may find sleep."

She twisted her fingers and sat forward in her chair, but she did not speak for a long time. Then she blurted, desperately, "What brings back love?"

"Between friends? Why, I have often helped in such matters. Pardon of mistakes and a better understanding are good remedies."

"Love between man and woman—husband and wife!"

"Are not the same remedies good?"

"It is not respectful for me to ask you such questions. You will think I'm only silly. Good people do not like such love as—" She checked herself and did not speak until he prompted her.

"I would like to understand a bit better—to help if I can," he urged, mildly. "You need not fear! I hear many things. It is my duty to listen, if I am to help."

She drew a long breath. "Yes, between friends—between husband and wife—there can be hard words and black looks—but afterward a kiss or a shake of the hand, and all is well again. I have seen. I know." Then suddenly she burst out of her repression. "But there's something else! It's made up of dreams and wishes and longings! It's all on fire, it snaps its fingers at all who say 'no' to it, it gives up everything, it is wonderful and beautiful. It's a heavenly light—it's more than sunshine—and then it goes out and leaves everything black. What has gone? Can it ever be brought back?" In her extremity, words for her passion had been given her!

He pondered. "I am finding it hard to answer you, my daughter. I do not know much about that kind of love. I believe there has been much poetry written about it. I suppose that when one finds it it is beautiful, as you say. Beautiful as sunshine, I grant. But it would be dangerous to depend on storing one's supply of sunshine in a vessel which could be broken; spilled sunshine could not be easily gathered up again."

"And so that kind of love cannot be brought back?" she asked, disconsolately.

"But you have called it a dream, my daughter. You seem to have named it well. All dreams are soon finished, dreams deceive, dreams are vain things. I think one should be glad to come back to honest life, waking up from the dream."

"But I am not glad. It was love. Won't it come back again?"

"My opinion will be only poor guesswork." Nevertheless the little priest was guessing at something which his own knowledge made probable. Paul Sabatis had proudly explained to the *curé* a determination to go into the north country and test the treaty rights of the Abnaki race. Père Laflamme had heard the faint echo of a border rumor.

"But you are wise and you are old and you have listened to many in their sorrows, good father."

"Yes, I have listened. And when they have wanted my help they have told me all."

He waited a long time, but she did not speak.

"And when I have been told enough so that I could help I have talked with one and then the other. He has gone away, eh? I have often smoothed the road between folks so that they could come together again and be happy. When I know him I shall answer your questions better."

"I'll never tell you who he is. Never, never! I have given a pledge to him."

"I do not ask you to break your word. I am sorry. I would like to help you."

"But when he goes away—when he will not come to me any more—when he turns his face from mine and his kisses are cold—what does it mean?" she pleaded, knowing in her own heart what it must mean, but frenziedly eager for some sort of reassurance from one who was older and wiser. "Can he be brought back to me and be mine again, as he was before?"

In spite of his humility in profession of knowledge regarding heart affairs, Père Laflamme had no mean powers of discernment and judgment. It was the old story. He had heard it often. He harbored no illusions. It was

not in his heart to give this tortured girl any hypocritical assurances.

He turned in his chair and faced her. She stretched out her hands, tear-wet, appealingly. "Good father, tell me! Can it be made as it was before?"

In spite of his pity, the little priest replied with a sort of grim irony which he was not able to suppress. The old story—another girl living it for the first time! "Yes, it can be made as it was!" He was promptly sorry because he had said it; her eyes widened with hope. "But it can only be made so by a miracle."

Then he was more honestly sorry! He had expected that she would understand the irony; he wanted to bring her out of that dream so that he could administer consolation when she was in sane and chastened mood. But in her desperate reaching for help she saw only what her impulse forced her to look for. She was no longer normal in her ideas and power to reason. She was dominated by heart-hunger and passion, she sought to hold again what had been lost. With simple faith she seized on what he had offered.

She locked the fingers of her hands to control their trembling. "A miracle?" she whispered.

The little *curé*, looking on that pathetic face, had no courage to take from her just then the questionable solace his statement had given her.

"I have read the Bible, *bon curé*. But are there miracles in these days?" Her grief had numbed the more active qualities of her mind; she was like a confiding child, wistfully seeking knowledge.

He hesitated only for a moment. "Yes, my daughter! I feel justified by my faith in saying that there are miracles still."

Then he wondered how he would keep on with her, holding to the truth, yet not bruising her faith.

Dame Barbe came to the door of the sitting-room. "It is late! Shall I light the bedroom candle?"

"Yes, it is late, Dame Barbe. But we have nearly finished our talk. Take your knitting and sit by the fire with us for a few minutes. What we talk about is for your ears, too." The little father was a bit at sea in his thoughts and felt that the presence of the practical old housekeeper would serve both as beacon and break-water; he rather feared too intimate questioning by this distracted girl. "Bring yon stool, my daughter. Sit here by my chair." He spoke soothingly as he would have addressed a child. "I will tell you, as best I can, about miracles in these days." To take her mind from her grief if he could, it seemed his best course!

The stool was low and he placed his hand upon her head with touch of paternal sympathy. "Not so very far from Sainte Agathe is a holy place where there are miracles in these days, so the good fathers of our Church affirm. To reach there one goes up our big river and past the mountains of Notre Dame and by the waterways of the Great Black, through the forests and down the slopes of L'Islet and Montmagny. And at last one comes to the mighty river and to the Côte de Beupre and there, where the water stretches wide and the mountain rises to the sky, is the gray church and it holds the shrine of Sainte Anne de Beupre—though all the folks call her 'La Bonne Sainte Anne.' You know, my daughter, she is the mother of Mary; she is the grandmother of the Blessed Jesus."

In the obscurity the girl's eyes glowed like stars; her lips were apart.

The *curé's* lips moved and no sound came. "Mary, Mother, help me!" he prayed. "You understand the heart. Give me the words for this child."

"Have you been there, *bon curé*?"

"Yes, I have been there many times. I have seen the holy relic—it is a bit of the finger-bone of the good saint. In its precious casket it's like a flake of gray moss."

"And it works miracles?"

The priest did not reply immediately. He realized that he was handling the fragile fabric of a child's faith and hopes.

Dame Barbe, however, had no doubts of any kind. She rested her busy needles. "Why do you ask the silly question, *mam'selle*? No wonder the good priest look at you! Hear me! Was there not my own brother—Timothée of the Twist-leg they call him all his life—who piled his crutch with the others at the door of the good Sainte Anne? *Oui!*"

"Let the child understand well," protested the *curé*, careful in his handling of the hopes. "Timothy's leg did not lose the twist."

"No, I do not say the good saint went so far—to take too much trouble for a man who would not need any legs for long. But he walked on the twist leg without the crutch—and the hurt was not bad, after a time."

"No, I'll admit that. The hurt was not so bad after a time," declared the priest, patting the dark hair. "And there are other hurts that La Bonne Sainte Anne does much to heal."

"*Oui, tout-à-fait*—nothing less! 'Poleon Gendreau, he swallowed the iron nail when he shingle on the house! He went all the way to the shrine. He prayed. Then he

coughed. And there this day is the iron nail hung on the sacristy wall, with a writing under it. Heh?"

"Yes, Dame Barbe, I have seen the nail. I have seen cripples come away rejoicing. But I have seen those who have deeper hurts—and they came away happier than the cripples. For the good saint had answered prayer and had lifted burdens and had taken the ache from the heart and had given new hope and courage. That's the healing I was talking about."

"A miracle—yes, that is it," whispered Lola.

"It is a holy place and I know that wonderful peace has been found there, my daughter. I have known of those who have left their sorrows on the Scala Santa—the holy stairs where the pilgrims climb on their knees, saying a prayer on every step. And in the church one may make the novena—the nine days of prayer. One lifts the eyes and sees always the blessed grandmother, standing there, holding the Infant Jesus in her arms. And she looks down and one knows that there is in the world a compassion that's sweeter than sympathy a human being can give and a love which outlasts all other kinds of love. But now it is too late for more questions, child," he said, checking her gently and patting her cheek. "The spirit of the good saint is here, though the holy relic and the grand figure the sculptor made are in the basilica at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. So run to bed and say a prayer to her before you sleep. Yes, then you will sleep! And if you dream that she bends over you in the night you shall tell about it to me in the morning. I believe you will smile in the morning. For the miracle of healing the heart is one that's easy for a saint. As for other things, we shall see what a petition to her may bring."

She kissed his hand and went away with Dame Barbe.

Until midnight the little priest sat and looked into the dying fire, busy with long rumination. How could he help her further? To be sure, he did not understand the situation very well; on the surface it was a lovers' quarrel; he wondered because her despair seemed to be so profound. In the past he had mediated in lovers' quarrels with success. He knew that Paul Sabatis was honorable. That way a mediator's duty lay. Père Laflamme decided to probe a little deeper when the morning light was bright and afforded a saner outlook.

So he shoveled the ashes to make safe the glowing coals and took his candle from the shelf, and in a little while the house was dark and still.

And in the silence and the darkness Lola lay, wide-eyed, under the coverlet that had been spread and tucked by the hands of Dame Barbe, revolving with passionate intensity the new hopes and plans which had been suggested to her.

He had said it—the *curé*, wise and old, had said it! Only by a miracle! And miracles were still wrought in the land. The priest had said it—Dame Barbe had so declared. The overwrought girl did not argue the subject with herself—she was too bitterly in need of hope. One steady light now beckoned her—La Bonne Sainte Anne was waiting in the gray church, with the Child Jesus in her arms, and had power that was not of man. Man could not help. Old Noel had failed—he had nothing to promise. It was all black except for the one light.

She made her resolve and trembled because of the daring of it.

She was awake and alert when the first gleam of dawn outlined the figured weave in the good dame's curtain which was draped at the gable window.

Cautiously, fearfully, holding her breath whenever creak or rustle warned her, she dressed and made her way down-stairs. Nobody hindered her. The doors of Père Laflamme were never locked.

Into the open—into the twilight of the morning! No one was abroad in Ste. Agathe. She hurried down the hill to the shore. The three Indians, wrapped in their blankets, were asleep under the sachem-canoe.

She touched Dunos Francis and he opened his eyes and did not require her gesture warning him to be silent; an Indian awakes with senses alert and nerves steady.

He drew himself carefully out from under the canoe and followed her a little way along the shore. She did not waste time. "Do you know of the shrine of Sainte Anne de Beaupré?"

Dunos nodded.

"Do you know the way there?"

"For certain! Have made the *voyage*!"

He showed neither surprise nor curiosity and she found it hard to keep on. After hesitation, with the timidity of one who fears refusal she drew from her breast a pouch of skin and offered it to Dunos. Tinkle of coins betrayed the contents; it was her stock of gold which she had earned by her own little enterprises—sale of skins from her traps for mink, sable, and fishcat; fruit of her industrious needles during the long evenings of winter.

"It is for you."

"But why for me, mam'selle?"

"If you and your brother will take me to Sainte Anne!" she pleaded. And when he looked at her for a time without replying she added: "I have much to ask of the good saint, Dunos. I need your help. When I have asked for help from others they have told me that I must explain

why I need the help. Must I tell you? Perhaps I must explain a part—perhaps I can tell you—”

He put up his hand, palm toward her. “No need to tell me. You say you want to go. That’s enough for me—enough for my brother. When?”

“We must hurry! I could not wait for the sun.”

When she tendered the pouch again he pushed back her hand.

“Not for pay. You’re friend, you’re cousin. We’re proud of that—my brother—me, too. But there’s a bigger reason. Now you’re princess. You say go. We go.”

“But I do not command. I have no right.”

“Yes, you have right. But you need not order us to go. You say you want to go? That’s enough,” he declared again, with emphasis.

He strode back to the canoe and set moccasined foot against the shoulder of his brother. “Up!” Peter opened his eyes and Noel stirred and dragged himself slowly from under the canoe. “To Sainte Anne—the shrine—we go now. Hurry!”

The chief stood up and voiced guttural astonishment.

“*Grandpère*, you cannot do any more. You have told me so. I have talked with the *curé*, and he is good and wise. You and I do not know, but he knows. It is the good saint who can do what you and I can’t do. I must go to her.”

With the word of the priest and with the mysteries of love and with the widely heralded power of La Bonne Ste. Anne, the old Indian had not the presumption to interfere. He had admitted his own helplessness. The *curé* must know best. There was hope, then! He was glad to see this new courage in the girl; after all, things would come right and his conscience would be freed from

a dreadful burden. He was sorry because he had depended on his own poor efforts for so long; somebody who was wise and good could have handled it all better!

He raised his hand and spoke to the Indians in the Mellicite tongue, solemnly. They replied gravely and earnestly. They bound themselves by the tribal oath.

There was food in the sachem-canoe, there were woods depots between them and the Laurentian Valley; they had their rifles. For such as they the forest was a storehouse of food if all other supplies failed. The chill of the dawn was giving way to the benignant warmth of an Indian summer day, for the sun's glowing circle was showing its upper limb above the eastern hills. The river was a golden flood. In the sachem-canoe, with the chief's kiss on her forehead, Lola set forth on her pilgrimage.

Old Noel stood on the river's bank and gazed after her till a wooded thrust of shore hid her waving hand. Yes, it must be so! A priest's wisdom and a good saint's power must prove to be supreme! The old Indian found the sunshine to be brighter, so it seemed, that morning. Life was worth something, after all, even at one hundred and two. But there was a more sinister reason for his grim determination to stay alive; he had invoked the great Pamola and had set himself as sentinel of vengeance over the man who had sworn an oath to a chief in order to possess a maiden who was princess of the tribe!

"She go! Now me go!" he muttered. "Beaver tail! Go eat him." For Noel that decision was corollary of his determination to keep on living.

He took his way past the church on the hill in leaving the village; he walked very slowly, and anxiously eyed the windows of the *curé's* house; he had a half-hope that

the priest would be stirring and would be willing to give the old *grandpère* a few words of encouragement regarding Lola's mission; for the old *grandpère* was guiltily aware that *père* and *mère* should be told that the girl was safe.

The priest did come forth, hurrying and calling to Noel. But Father Laflamme did not look either amiable or encouraging. He asked petulantly where Lola was.

"She gone. She start in a hurry to go where you told her."

The *curé* opened his mouth, but he did not speak. He was enlightened suddenly and felt amazement, doubt, and the sting of self-reproach. He had treated her as a child without taking into full account the dangers in the credulity of childhood. The little *curé* got control of himself in short order; the old Indian's bland demeanor indicated that what Lola had undertaken was very satisfactory in the opinion of this representative of the family; it would not do to interfere with the calm of this other child—the child of a hundred years.

"Oh yes! Very well," said Father Pierre, in as matter-of-fact tone as he could muster. "But—but—well, I thought she was coming back to have breakfast."

"Must hurry!"

"And I wanted to make sure that she had the right—the proper—" probed the priest, having only vague surmise to apply to Lola's method of making the pilgrimage for which he felt uncomfortably responsible.

"She has Dunos and Peter—her cousins. The sachem-canoe. They smart. Know all the way."

"Yes! Then all will be fine! . Perhaps she did tell me who would take her when I wasn't paying attention." The priest turned to go; the Indian's stare was rather disconcerting.

Old Noel's wrinkles etched disappointment into the mask of his earlier contentment. He yearned for some information regarding that mysterious remedy which served for troubles too serious for mere mortal efforts to cure.

"By the way, Noel," called the little father, facing about, "come in with me and have breakfast. Excuse me for not asking you at first."

"Must hurry! Long way to walk! Eat what's here!" He patted his little pack. "But me like something better than breakfast"

"What?"

"To know what you know—that the saint will make it right again for Lola."

"Why are you so sure that I know?"

"She say you wise and good—and know."

Father Laflamme was conscious that he constantly tried to be good, but he was not at all convinced of his wisdom just then. As certainly as if he had commanded her obedience he had sent that girl away on a hazardous journey; his faith was considerable, but even his high respect for the powers of La Bonne Ste. Anne did not assure him that the pilgrim would not be bitterly disappointed and more particularly heartbroken because she had trusted so implicitly to his counsel, believing in his wisdom.

"So it will be all well with her, eh?"

"It is well for all of us, Noel, when we humbly put our affairs into the keeping of God. Lola has done that. You and I will believe from now on that all will be well. That belief of ours will help her belief. Yes, it will be well for her."

"Breakfast, dinner, supper—all things in the world to

eat—that word is best of all,” declared the chief, and he made his obeisance and stalked away.

It was not by whim that John Kavanagh built his main depot-camp on the Sickle-hook; at the thoroughfare was one end of the old Indian portage, the carry from the Toban Valley over the height of land to the country of Lac Noir—the Black Water. Kavanagh's crews made the portage a main avenue for the branch logging roads which reached into the heart of the black growth.

Therefore, when, at last, the sachem-canoe arrived at the Sickle-hook it was lifted out for the long portage, and Lola Hébert, following her laden men across the slope of the X. K. clearing, came face to face with Clare Kavanagh. In the woods the points of etiquette are not whittled too finely; Clare put out friendly hand and gave cordial greeting.

“I ought to know who you are, though I don't remember that I have ever seen you before. I'm going to guess! You're Lola Hébert!”

“Yes, Mam'selle Kavanagh!”

“Oh, you know me?”

“I have heard about you. And I know all this is yours.” Lola looked about her timidly.

“You cannot go many miles before dark. Please rest here with your men and make an early start to-morrow.”

“I must hurry, mam'selle.” That spirit of urgent haste was with her, growing more imperious with every day that had passed since they left Ste. Agathe. “We can reach the Agwam clearing to-night, Dunos tells me.”

“But so much hurry! You are going a long way!” There was considerable natural feminine curiosity behind

the question. Paul Sabatis had gone into the north; this girl, so rumor had spread, was his sweetheart.

But the face that Clare looked on was not the countenance of a maid who was seeking a happy reunion with her lover. Sorrow had put its seal on the mouth and the eyes were tired with weeping.

"Yes, it's far to go. I must hurry."

"But let the men step to the cook-camp for a bite. And you come with me. We'll have Elisiane make tea for us." It was not mere polite invitation; Clare urged with tone and smile and took the girl's hand. This wanderer surely needed friendliness! But Lola did not obey the little pull of the consoling hand. Clearly she was distressed, abashed, lacking courage and words to help her in her effort to escape.

"Do you really feel that you *must* go on in such a hurry? I don't mean to be over-pressing, but I do wish you'd break bread with me. We'd remember each other so much better afterward."

"Some one is waiting—no, I mean that I must go to some one and I must hurry," insisted the girl, falteringly. "It is some one in the Church of Sainte Anne at Beaupré."

For Clare, in spite of the girl's forlorn air, that statement held a touch of romance. Was this an elopement? Was the lover waiting over in the valley of the big river?

Lola bent suddenly and kissed Clare's hand. "I don't need anything else to make me remember you as long as I live. It isn't that I don't want to stay. I don't dare to stay." Her fingers were at her throat. Impulse that was almost hysteria was actuating her. She had affrightedly drawn back from exposing her pitiful secret to the priest; but now only sharp memory of Donald's com-

mands was preventing her from telling all to this girl who looked at her in a way that was almost appeal to be allowed to know and to help. A girl would understand better than a priest or a grandfather! The words of confession, of appeal, were choking her. In her loneliness on the island farm she had never had a girl companion, a friend, a confidante. "I don't dare to stay. It's all here!" She pressed hard against her throat. "It wants to come out. But I shall be shamed and I'll not be forgiven if I break my word. And what I say now—why am I saying it?"

In her stress of emotion she had put into words a question which she was asking of herself. Under the force of this new and strange impulse she found that she was losing her sense of discretion. "I'm afraid!" she panted. She retreated from Clare, stepping slowly backward, and then turned and hurried away; the silent Indians picked up the sachem-canoe and followed. Clare, wondering, anxious, perturbed, stood motionless until Lola and her men were hidden in the mouth of the woods.

Then Tom Kilbeck ventured to speak to her; with a cat on each shoulder and one in his arms he had been standing near, unnoticed, with the innocent demeanor of a man utterly absorbed in his study of the sachem-canoe.

"Beg your favor, mum, but I can mark thot ye're filled wi' wonder along o' me. Ut's a grand canoe they're tussling yon."

Clare had not given the canoe one flick of notice.

"I wonder where'er they found the tree for ut," went on Tom. "None such grow in these days. All of bark ut was, as ye noted. Gummed wi' pitch and sewed wi' deer sinews. And I hope ye minded the carving on the

thwarts and the figgers on the bow and stern. Grand wor-rk!"

Clare turned toward him the blank countenance of one who had not heard. "You know that girl, don't you, Kilbeck?"

"Yus, mum," said Tom, having heard all their conversation.

"She is very much distressed by some kind of trouble. Is it true that she and young Sabatis are going to be married?"

"I do not know ut to be true, mum, but I wush it were. He's a feckful, braw laddie."

"But would he harm a girl and make her unhappy?"

Tom squinted shrewdly at the sky and stroked the cat in his arms. "I can only guess that he would not, mum. Ut's not of a piece wi' his other ways." Then he looked squarely into her eyes. "I can guess that he would not so much as kick a wee bit cat. But a man thot wull kick a pussy he'll do 'most anything else."

Clare did not see much appositeness in the latter part of Kilbeck's answer. "But it must be that she is following him. He made the portage here, so I have been told."

"Ay, mum! He lifted out here when ye were doon-river. And whilst he sat wi' me for a wee bit time the cats cuddled to him. The cats know!"

She puckered her forehead and gazed again at the woods opening.

"I remember now that Warden Wallin went through here over the portage. Somebody told me that he was following Sabatis."

"Ay, mum, he was. But thot doesn't count. He's a liar and other things—thot's Wallin! The laddie is not what Wallin says he is—he's no outlaw."

"I'm afraid something is wrong—very wrong!" She said it more to herself than to Kilbeck and continued to ponder.

"Ut's too bad ye were not here when the laddie passed," proceeded Tom, making the most of this opportunity to chat with the "lass o' the lofty place." "I'm guessing—only guessing, mind ye—thot he has had naught to do wi' fashing the feelings of the Hébert lassie. But, mind ye, I'm guessing—ut's my fir-rm conviction that the laddie, Paul, knows well who has made her grieve. Ye might have asked him. He could refuse nothing to such as ye!" He bowed.

"How can a guess agree with a firm conviction, Kilbeck?" she demanded, sharply. "You must know more than you're telling me. What do you know and how did you find it out?"

But Mr. Kilbeck's Scotch caution was in arms. He had considerable knowledge, to be sure, but it was based on the rather hazy recollections of what he had heard during drunken half-slumber. He had no relish for confessing intoxication or for an attack on the intrenched Donald Kezar with such uncertain weapons.

"And there's old Noel, mum. Ye maun ask him. He's o' the family. But I know naught o' mysel'. Only this, that a man who kicks a kitty he'll do 'most anything else. They all cuddled to Sabatis."

"I don't follow your reasoning, Kilbeck, and I don't think you're frank with me!" However, she was quite frank in showing her displeasure. She frowned and turned away.

"May I ask for a wor-rd or twa more wi' ye, mum?" pleaded Tom. "Ut's about my own concerns!"

"Certainly, Kilbeck."

"Am I suiting ye as one fit to be trusted wi' the r-responsibility I have?"

"You are faithful and honest and I value you very highly. My father spoke well of you, Kilbeck."

"Thot's for my credit, mum, and what you say is for my high honor. I'm pleased. Now I know thot if anybody says aught to you against me, ye'll let me come and match wor-rds wi' 'em."

"Who would be likely to say anything against you?"

"Ut may now have all passed from his mind—being but a small matter for him—but Mr. Kezar did say to me one day thot he would discharge me. Ut was not because my wor-rk was neglected; ut was on a per-rsonal matter."

"May I know what the personal matter was?"

"Wull, I'll say, because I want ut known by you thot ut had naught to do wi' the job. He threatened me because I talked a bit sharp to him after he had kicked a cat!"

Mr. Kilbeck's air of innocence endured the test she made with her eyes. After prolonged scrutiny she went away, walking slowly like one who was in deep thought.

Mr. Kilbeck blew a puff of breath into the ear of the cat in his arms. The cat flicked the ear vigorously. "Tickles? Eh, auld mouser, what?"

CHAPTER XXV

Warden Wallin catches his perfectly good Indian, and then, in the company of others, catches something else.

AFTER a time it became Game Warden Jesse Wallin's profane opinion that a few days' devotion to gin and melody had caused him to "lose a perfectly good Indian."

The warden had prolonged his stay at Dolan's House. He had not believed that Sabatis would leave the valley of the Toban. When the warden finally set out for up-river he found that he was chasing a man who was always a few days in the lead; Wallin showed his blue badge, asked plenty of questions, and got that information.

At the Sickle-hook take-out he learned that his quarry had gone over the height of land by way of the long portage. Mr. Wallin had a streak of natural laziness that had been considerably amplified by his hospital rest-periods. Ordinarily Mr. Wallin would have quit at the Sickle-hook; he knew what the job of "shagging a canoe" to the Black Water would amount to in the way of sweat and strength. But Mr. Wallin had worked himself up to a particularly ugly mood. He had started his "back-fire" propaganda along the river, reporting that Sabatis was a self-declared outlaw and must be caught. Therefore men were expecting Warden Wallin to perform! He kept on going and grew uglier. No Indian had any right

to make so much work for an officer! After he was in the Black Water the pursuer was ferocious. In those solitudes he was, to be sure, safer from troublesome espionage in the job he proposed to put over; but the wilderness had swallowed up the quarry. Wallin was obliged to do some guessing as to the route Sabatis had taken, but, as he thought on it, it seemed probable that the Indian had kept on across the lakes, seeking the outlet which flowed down into the Laurentian Valley.

The likelihood that Sabatis was over the border, out of the States, had no effect on the officer's determination. He was not allowing any consideration of international law to conflict with strictly personal business.

But the strong winds from the north cuffed the white-caps down the lakes o' days, and Mr. Wallin damned the head-winds and was obliged to loaf away the hours of sunlight in sheltered coves, brewing his tea and frizzling his bacon. When the winds were hushed in the night he paddled along under the stars, holding so close to the shore that he could hear the expiring waves splashing against the rocks.

Here and there, now and then, he saw the flicker of a camp-fire and hailed and went ashore and made friends with timber-cruisers and other forest stragglers. Therefore, by dint of this persistency, one night he came upon Paul Sabatis, who had not hurried after he came to the lakes.

The young man greeted the warden unsuspectingly and went on tending the fire which had been a beacon for the pursuer. It was not an ordinary cook-fire; it was partly banked by sweet duff and dried fungi which sent up much smoke; a funnel of hemlock bark led the smoke to a bark box. It was a forest smoke-house.

The warden smelled the odor of curing flesh and he saw part of the carcass of a deer hanging from a tree.

"Help yourself," invited Paul.

"Being a game warden," returned Mr. Wallin, loftily, "I reckon I'd be poisoned eating off any deer killed by a man who hasn't taken out a regular hunting license."

"I haven't taken out any license."

"I reckoned you hadn't. I have heard the word you have been giving out!"

The Indian straightened up from the fire. "Are you here to arrest me?"

"Good Lord, no!" expostulated Mr. Wallin. "Rest easy on that, Paul." Sabatis had come upon his feet suddenly, and his size, outlined by the firelight, was intimidating. The warden held firm opinion that Indians were notional and treacherous and must be met with guile. "And, to tell you the real truth, Paul, I ain't a game warden just now; I've taken a job cruising for ties and ship-knees. Besides, this is over the border and out of my jurisdiction anyhow!"

"Warden or no warden, I am not afraid to tell you what I have told others, Mr. Wallin. I have the treaties in which the right is given to the Algonquins and the Tariatines to hunt the woods and fish the streams and take basket-wood and bark forever. I hope to make enough noise about it in the world so that the white man will hear and be ashamed. I did not kill this deer for sport—I killed it because I was hungry. So have the other Indians hunted and killed, and they have been put into jails."

"That's right! Law says jail, Indian or no Indian." He gave the same ironic twist to "Indian" that Paul had applied to "warden."

"My fathers were here before your fathers came. The white men gave us treaties. They have never allowed us to vote and help make the laws. I do not accept a law that is counter to our treaties."

"Never heard of any writing that gives Indians the right to hunt and fish the year round. Reckon if there was anything of that sort the men who make the laws would have heard about it."

"A good many men who make laws have never heard of justice."

"Guess I won't argue the thing with you."

"No, it's not worth while. The fact that, of all the tribes, only about five hundred Indians are left between here and the sea seems to show that we'd have done better never to argue with white men."

"Can't keep on living in bow-and-arrer days," observed Mr. Wallin, sagely.

"I suppose that's the business man's way of looking at it. Probably I am a fool to take an Indian viewpoint." He turned back to his fire.

Mr. Wallin lighted his pipe and settled down with the air of a man who proposed to stop for a while. "Some of these high-schools, so it has seemed to me, put a lot of fool notions into young noddles. I'm glad I kept away from schools when I was young. It has always seemed to me that I can take a more common-sense view of things than most of these educated high-toners that I have seen. Always got along all right by using my own head instead of borrowing book learning." It occurred to Mr. Wallin that probably no book gave really worth-while and explicit directions how to make an outlaw and then make profitable use of said outlaw. After his hard chase he had at last come up with this visible and valuable equiva-

lent of ready money and of cozy rest in the society of ministering woman. There was no weakening of determination. Mr. Wallin had much dogged grit; it was a nasty job, he reflected, but he looked beyond it to an alluring prospect of pleasure. He sat and gazed on the Indian with quite a complacent air of proprietorship; Sabatis was only a redskin; the fact that he had been to college gave Mr. Wallin poorer opinion of the young man's worth than otherwise. The warden had had excellent luck in the self-infliction of wounds; he nestled his arm against his side to make sure of the comforting presence in his shirt pocket of his iodine, his antiseptic medicament, of his home-made tourniquet—a strap of leather armed with an overshoe snap-buckle. He had not made up his mind into what part of himself he would put a bullet; he had his doctored cartridge ready. He decided that he would make up his mind about the character of the wound after he had conveyed Paul back across the border and was in reach of aid.

The young man did not speak to Wallin again.

After a time Paul banked the smoke-fire with damp moss, buttoned his jacket closely, and lay down, his head upon his pack. Either he had no suspicion that the warden intended mischief or he contemptuously disregarded danger from such a source.

He slept and Wallin puffed his pipe and waited. The pursuer was in fine form to keep a vigil; he had been sleeping days while the head-winds cuffed up whitecaps. When he decided that he was ready for operations he put his pipe in his pocket and went to his canoe, tiptoeing in his moccasins. From his pack he obtained two lengths of new clothes-line which he had soaped and worked into

pliable condition. They were slip-nooses, with braided eye-splices and well-placed catch-knots.

Sabatis lay on his back, his feet together, and slept with Indian indifference as to shelter.

Wallin crept to him, holding one piece of rope looped and ready on his forearm. The ground was uneven and the warden was able to slide one end of the other piece of rope under Paul's legs; he slipped the end through the eye-splice, and then, standing astride the young man's body, he drew the noose taut with a jerk. He had had experience in that mode of capture; as he expected, Sabatis snapped up into a sitting posture and Wallin dropped the other noose over his captive's head to the elbows, and set his foot against the Indian's breast and yanked. He had his man. He made a few turns, some quick knots, and stepped back.

"So you lied to me, white-man fashion, Wallin?"

"I'm running my own business in my own way."

"I'm arrested, am I?"

"No, I'm playing cat's-cradle with you." The first part of the hateful job had been attended to, and the warden was willing to be humorous according to his lights.

"You yourself declared that you're out of your jurisdiction, as you put it."

"You don't think I shall tell judge and jury where I arrested you, do you? It's my word that'll be believed; outlaws don't get any show in court."

"I am not an outlaw!" protested Sabatis, angrily.

"You will be after they get my story about you," stated Mr. Wallin, with bravado. "You may just as well know where you're getting off. I'm going to lie because I have good reasons for doing it. So don't be surprised at anything you hear me say."

"I shall not contradict you, Wallin. I'm perfectly willing to go to town with you and test out the matter of laws and our treaties in the court. But these ropes are hurting me. Take them off and I give you my word of honor that I'll go along quietly."

"Dealing with Indians that way ain't recommended in any book I have ever read. Perhaps your books say so, but mine don't."

"Wallin, this is atrocious! My word is good."

"Them ropes stay on. An Indian has got to take Indian medicine."

"Yet, in the case of a white man who breaks the game laws, you simply tap him on the shoulder and ask him to come to court some day when he isn't too busy!"

"Yes, that goes for a white man. They're different from Indians."

"Wallin, you spoke of having me know where I get off! Take a word from me! I swear that I'll go peaceably and willingly—I want to hear what the courts have to say about the Abnaki treaties."

"I won't take your word!"

"Then you'll have to take this other one, you damned sneak!" Sabatis shouted, no longer able to endure this insufferable effrontery. "I give you fair warning that I shall play this game after this on your own dirty basis. Look out for yourself."

"Looking out for myself has always been my best bet! And I'll risk you! Now if I'll help you stand up will you hop to that canoe of mine, or shall I roll you down the bank?"

Sabatis had too much agility to need help; he brought his pinioned feet under him and leaped up. "I suppose you'll be decent enough to do me one favor," he rasped. "Put my pack into my canoe and tow it, will you?"

"I *will* not! I'll cache the whole thing here. You won't be needing a canoe for a long time."

"But I shall come back here at once after I have appealed my case."

"It will be more of a case than you think for."

"But hunting without a license is only a trivial offense! I'm simply making a test of the thing." This dense ignorance and brutality seemed to need a little common sense applied. "I'm trying to get our treaties before the higher courts."

"Don't know nothing about that! Don't care! But you won't be back here for a long time. No need of my fooling with an extra canoe. Hop!" The warden kicked down the little smoke-house and trampled on the fire; he carried away the meat. Paul made the best of his way to the warden's canoe and rolled into it and kept still; he wore the air of a man who knew that further appeal would be self-insult; it would feed Wallin's sense of importance; the warden had assumed the domineering bluster and the bawling tone with which the coarse dolts of policedom try to emphasize authority.

The warden lighted a lantern and arranged its reflector so that he could observe every motion made by the captive. When they were on their way down the lake Wallin showed a willingness to talk, but Sabatis turned away his face and shut his eyes. His arms ached, his feet were numb, protest raged in him, but he argued and complained no more.

After the sun came up Wallin began a continuous growl of anathema; the wind had shifted to the southwest and he viewed the change, if one could judge from his language, as something calculated by the higher forces for his sole and personal inconvenience. He was compelled

to go ashore. He built a fire and fed his prisoner, who resolutely refused to engage in conversation, even though the captor loosed the ropes enough so that Sabatis could lift hands to his mouth.

The warden soon found relief from this unsociability, two other voyagers from the north, who had stuck it out longer than Mr. Wallin because there were two paddles to his one, tossed around the point and came ashore through frothing waves when they spied men and a camp-fire. They joined with Mr. Wallin in an amiable chorus of curses for the wind, they produced a big bottle of white rum, and they heard what the warden had to say about the desperate character of his prisoner. Mr. Wallin lied frankly and unashamed and elaborately, without bothering himself to draw apart from Paul's hearing.

In spite of their friendly manners, these visitors were unwelcome; they had obliged Mr. Wallin to change his program materially. He had planned fiction which had to do with an unprovoked attack by Paul. It would now be necessary to frame a lie which would account for a wound received during a desperate attempt of the prisoner to escape. But the warden had often tested his inventive powers and on this occasion he found that they were in good working order.

However, he could not lie out of the fact that his little blue badge did not give him authority on that side of the border.

The visitors were quite friendly in their reference to that fact, but they explained that they were game patrols for the sportsmen's syndicate which controlled hunting in that section and that they wanted to show results to their employers; it was their opinion that this desperate character should be turned over to them.

But Mr. Wallin was deeply committed to the "bird-in-hand" doctrine. They entered into a long discussion. It was not necessary to hurry the argument; the waves were lashing the boulders along the shore, filling the cove with foaming tumult. The officers lolled, smoked their pipes, and after a time there was another bottle of the "morson." This white liquor is potent. Mr. Wallin forgot himself on details in repeating the lies and was not so cogent in his reasons why he should hold this prisoner for himself. But he insisted doggedly that he proposed to hang on, and he defied the whole Canadian government, having arrived at that point of belligerency in the late afternoon.

The matter having then become a purely international affair, with national pride in arms on both sides, the finer points of rights and wrongs were quite confused with a more elemental proposition; which country was coming out ahead in the dispute?

The captive had scornfully refrained from any comment on the warden's lies; he was silent during the profane maunderings of the three. He nursed the savage hope that they would fall on one another and perform the mutual service of ridding the world of three men who showed such brutal disregard of common decency. The honest anger which was gathering in Paul began to be spiced with the poison of a hatred that was part disgust—and that sort of animosity demands revenge. He hitched about cautiously and tried to find a rock or thrust of ledge against which he could saw the rope which bound his feet. But the rocks were too smooth and the soapy rope resisted.

"If you Canucks want Indians for prisoners, or for pets or peep-show purposes," declared Mr. Wallin, reiterating

a statement he had made many times during the afternoon, "go get some for yourselves. I've got mine. I know just what I'm going to do with him." Then all of a sudden he scrambled up and teetered on unsteady feet and pointed wavering finger. "There's some! Help yourselves!"

In a situation where the fine points of human rights and wrongs had been clouded until it seemed to be merely a question of supply of prisoners, what was now offered promised to solve the dispute. There was not only an Indian apiece for all—there was an extra one.

A big canoe had come surging past the horn of the headland, close to the shore, a pebble-toss from the heart of the cove.

It was the sachem-canoe; it would live in waters where smaller canvas craft would be swamped. And Dunos and Peter, master-canoemen, were handling the paddles. The big waves were quartering behind them and their shallop was hoisted on glorious surges; the servitors were hastening their princess to her rendezvous.

"There's Indians—even the girl is one," persisted Wallin.

Sabatis stared. At first he didn't recognize Lola, though she was near. Then out of his knowledge of such matters, recognizing the hue of the acorn-brew, he saw that she had given her face the dusky color of the Mellicites.

"Stop!" roared one of the Canadians. He lurched forward, grabbed Wallin's rifle from its stand against a tree, and fired several times, pumping the cartridges viciously, popping the empty shells out upon the ground. He aimed obviously high, but when he started toward the shore, still firing, he stumbled over a root and the girl's scream and the Indians' shouts told of trouble.

The paddlers beat the water and headed the canoe into the cove. They drove their blades deeply and furiously.

"They're looking for trouble," advised one of the Canadians; he ran to his canoe and secured his rifle. "Be ready for 'em!"

Dunos and Peter leaped into the water just before the prow of the canoe touched the shore. They lifted it by the gunwales and ran up the shelving ledges, carrying girl and all. Water was pouring out of the holes in the bark, showing where a bullet had crashed through. The panting Indians and the armed men stood there facing one another in silence.

"You dogs! You hellhounds!" raged Paul; he struggled and leaped and came upon his feet.

The girl gave him frightened, amazed stare, but did not speak.

"What for you do that?" demanded Dunos. "You shoot our canoe."

"We want you! You're arrested," explained one of the Canadians.

"For what?"

Fine points of rights were no longer clouded; the clouds and the fine points were ruthlessly brushed aside and cast away. Here were Indians. Their arrival had settled a dispute among officers of the law.

"Where's your hunting licenses?"

"We no hunt."

"What are those rifles for? To pick your teeth with?"

"But we no hunt."

"You can explain that to the judge. You're arrested! Here! Come away from that canoe. Touch those guns and there'll be a couple more Indians rapping on the back door of hell."

"Dunos and Peter!" called Sabatis. "Take no chances with these men now. They're drunk. There's no sense in them."

The Canadian officers were better provided with catch-pole gear than was Wallin. While one held ready rifle the other went forward and snapped handcuffs on the wrists of the captives. "Mind your eye, boys, and there'll be no trouble," was the patronizing promise when the men had been secured.

Wallin, like most others of the lower Toban, had heard of the White Lily, though he had never seen her; but, slight as was her disguise, he did not guess at her identity; his wits were not clear enough for much shrewd guesswork. He went to the canoe and offered his hand and leered amiably, his emotions of coarse gallantry stirred by this promise of feminine companionship. To be sure, it was not Miss Clare P. Tucker nor was it a nurse; but she was a pretty girl, even if she was only an Indian.

"Excuse all accidents, sis! They're bound to happen. Don't be scared. I'll take care of you."

She avoided his hand and stepped out of the canoe. She turned to Paul, but he narrowed his eyes and she accepted his stern demeanor as signal of hostility or hint that she was not to show recognition; nor, in that moment, despite his plight, was she sure that she had forgiven him for those rumored boastings and his disastrous meddling. Therefore she found it easy to be as coldly oblivious as he.

"What have we done? You do not tell us," ventured Peter.

"It'll all be explained before the court. Better not talk any more. It will be used against you," advised the man with the rifle.

"But I have a right to know why we have been stopped in this manner!" cried Lola. "I am in a great hurry."

"The hurry will have to wait."

"But I beg you! I'll go down on my knees and beg you to let us go on. The canoe can be soon mended. I have far to go." The tremor of choked sobs shook her tones.

"It's no good to argue and coax, little squaw. Later we'll see what can be done." He exchanged looks with his colleague. They confessed in that interchange of glances that this thing had been done on muddled impulse, but now they promised each other by squint and cock of eyebrow that they would stand by and see it through after the fashion which seemed best.

"We'll have to do a little private discussing on the matter," stated the other. "Make up your minds to stay here till we have made ours up." They walked off a little way.

"We don't propose to have any of this Indian-style plotting and treachery going on here," blurted Warden Wallin. "You two new ones go over there and sit on that knoll. Don't you go nigh my Indian. And now, sis, you can cuddle down side of me and tell me your troubles." He touched her arm; she drew away from him.

"You and those men are making my great trouble for me just now. Please, oh, please—"

"It's no good to beg for what can't be allowed, sis. It only spoils a good time. What's your name? I wouldn't wonder if it's something pretty. It's pretty if it goes with your looks. Don't be afraid of me, I tell you. I'd never harm a hair on this head." He patted her cheek and then set thumb and forefinger under her chin, raising

her face closer to his. It might have been that Paul misjudged Mr. Wallin's amorous intentions, perhaps the philanderer did not intend to kiss the girl. But his attitude and his silly grin gave such ominous evidence of his design that the crazed lover did not pause to waste any time in speculating. That rude touch on her face had been more than enough provocation for him. Joel Paul Honoré L'Heureux had taught his nephew the virtue and the viciousness of the *coup-à-pied*. Paul's feet were pinioned close together and he was prevented from dealing the real blow—the swinging blow. But he made three tremendous leaps forward, snapping his feet off the ground, and landed squarely against the dodging Wallin's breast. The kick knocked the man down the slope and against the boulders of the shore; Paul himself fell on his back—fell so helplessly that breath and senses left him for a few moments.

Wallin was up first; he groaned and limped about in a circle; blood was oozing from a jagged cut on his forehead.

When he started back up the slope he was a slowly moving picture of malevolence; his head was set forward, his jaws were jammed hard together, his arms were stiff and outspread, and his fists were doubled. But he did not hurry. He was heading toward a victim who was not able to run away. The manacled Indians stood helplessly at one side; they were shod with moccasins and their kicks could not prevail. Lola stepped in front of the moving menace and raised her hands in mute appeal, but Wallin thrust her to one side. Paul was on his feet by the time the warden had reached him. The Canadians looked on and said no word. Wallin was so slow, so calculating in his action, that he was masking his brutal

design. He brought his fist around in a wide arc and drove a vicious blow against Paul's jaw. The victim went down and lay motionless.

"That's enough, Wallin!" shouted one of the officers. "It's an even split as it stands—though you don't get much credit for hitting a man with his arms tied. Enough, I say!" He hurried to Wallin and pushed him away; the warden had raised his foot over the Indian's face.

Lola ran to her fettered men and kneeled behind them.

But the warden was no longer in the mood for courtship; he stumbled away to the shore and dashed water against his forehead and doctored the cut with his medicament.

When consciousness returned to Paul he made no move which betrayed that fact. The night had settled over the lake and the wind was stilled. For a time he listened to an acrimonious debate carried on by the three officers at the camp-fire. The discussion concerned the custody of the girl. Wallin insisted that he be allowed to take her back to her home, wherever it might be. The Canadians put equal insistence on their claim that she must go with them to appear as witness against the two prisoners. The debate was arriving at no conclusion because both parties knew that their claims were subterfuges and they were not willing to admit the truth.

It was plain contest for a trophy or a victim; at any rate, Paul found sinister intimation of danger for Lola in this dispute. They were not regarding her as a woman entitled to deference and help. On account of the color of her face they had set her apart from such consideration. There was peril in this drunken estimation of her as a plaything. He wanted to shout that she was the daughter of Farmer Onésime Hébert of the big island; but his

astonishment when he had first seen her in the north country now settled into a more cautious emotion—speculation as to why she was voyaging in that far land. She had a purpose; her eager pleading had revealed that the purpose was a compelling one. His fear in her behalf was nearly balanced by his generosity; he did not want to betray that which she was trying to conceal. Evidently she had not as yet told those men who she was; the daughter of Onésime Hébert would not be humiliated thus by a discussion which fitted the case of a vagrant squaw; the men were not moderating their voices.

The waves were splashing lazily in the cove; the lake was going to sleep.

Sabatis felt that these dogs would soon be doing something else besides prolonging a quarrel over this morsel; they would be taking advantage of the calm to go their ways. If Wallin should prevail, what sort of agony would the pinioned lover be called on to undergo? He had been having bitter experience in finding out how far Wallin's contemptuous disregard of the human feelings of Indians would carry the brute. If she went with the others, then what he might suspect but could not see—

The poor boy rolled upon his face and moaned; bound hand and foot, bruised, numb, and aching, he was such a broken and useless weapon for her defense!

The next moment he felt her two warm hands on his two cheeks. "Paul! Paul!" she whispered. "What have we done? What does it all mean? Oh, I pity you. He was wicked!"

Wallin leaped from the fire; he had seen her when she hurried to Paul. The warden set hands on her and pulled her to her feet. "No conniving here, sis! What are you up to?"

"He is much hurt. He groaned. I came here to help him."

Wallin suddenly crushed his lips against hers. "You think of *me*! It's enough for you to be thinking of. I'll look after you!" In spite of her struggles he drew her to the fire. "Look here, men! Let the girl say something about it. Sis, if you go with these men you'll be put into jail. If you come with me, I'll take you to your home, wherever it is. I'm taking that prisoner back."

"My men—"

"It's no use to argue about that, I tell you. They've got to go the other way!"

She gazed up at the stars—into the north. In that moment she looked deeply into her own heart as well. The pitiful, battered figure lying near her under the tree! He had defended her as best he could. She did not dare to glance in his direction; she knew that she would betray herself and him by speaking what she wanted to tell him. Then inspiration helped her in that crisis. "I'm trying hard to know what is best, sir. Will you wait while I say my prayer to the Great Spirit? I want to know what is right to do."

"He'll probably tell you to go home. So go ahead and pray," consented the warden.

She clasped her hands and raised her eyes and spoke to the heavens in the Mellicite tongue. "Brave, good boy, I am talking to you. I do not understand. It breaks my heart because I cannot go on. But after what you have done to help me I would be too selfish if I go on, even if I might. I'll go with you and try to stop that wicked man from hurting you any more."

She was silent for some time.

"You haven't said 'amen,'" prompted Mr. Wallin. "If you're done, though, what's the verdict?"

"I will go with you, sir."

To the tortures of Paul was added this new agony of knowing that she had failed in some precious quest and, in her own trouble, was willing to assist him in his woe. Gratitude flamed in him and his zeal burned to repay her with deeds. Could his muscles have swelled as did his heart he would have burst those ropes which bound him.

"You heard what she said! That settles it, gents!"

"We're not letting our prisoner settle anything."

But Mr. Wallin had been looking ahead to that final clinch. He himself, before relations had become strained, had collected all the rifles and had stacked them against a tree. He leaped, gathered them in his arms, ran toward the shore, plucked out his own weapon, and flung the others into the cove.

"Now who's boss?" he squalled. He came back into the edge of the firelight and patted the rifle. "Get along out of this with your prisoners!"

After considerable of a wait the Canadian officers started toward Dunos and Peter, walking close together and mumbling. A click, a rattle, and the two of them came back, one of them dangling empty handcuffs. "So long as you're crazy about collecting Indians, you're welcome to a couple more."

But two loose Indians did not fit in with Wallin's calculations. "You haven't any right to let your prisoners go that way!"

"We've been thinking it over, and you seem to be the only one who knows what they're guilty of," was the unabashed reply.

Wallin set his back to a tree in a position where he could command the few square rods of the clearing. "I shall do shooting if I'm forced to it," he declared.

"Yes, you'll do 'most anything, according to the way we've got you sized up. What you have done to our rifles was a plenty!" It was said in tone of anger and disgust; the speaker turned promptly to Lola and put out his hand. "Good luck to you, girl!" His back was toward Wallin. Undetected by the warden, the Canadian passed to her a knife from the sheath in his belt. "You may have luck if you keep this handy," he murmured. "He's a bad one!"

"Don't you two Indians move out of your tracks or I'll bore you," bawled Wallin. He shook his rifle threateningly. In desperation he was striving to build a plan to suit this sudden dilemma. Elimination of the surly Canadians was the first requisite. He felt that he was able to cope with the Indians. He ordered the officers to leave and they started for their canoe. He gave his full attention to them, for they were on the move and there were loose rocks at hand.

Lola stepped backward; she was tingling with the resolution which comes to women in extremities. The proximity of an apparently helpless girl and a pinioned prisoner did not appear to draw Wallin's attention from what he was regarding with impatient intentness—the embarkation of the white men. She stooped slightly, set the keen hunter's blade between arm and body of Paul and drove downward, the ropes were severed. Then she dropped the knife on his knees and stepped away from him. He drew up his feet and cut the cord that fettered them.

But his confinement, his fall, Wallin's blow, had com-

bined to take his strength from him. He sat there without moving.

A sudden reflection that had to do with prudence was thrust suddenly into the warden's ugly mood; he was dealing with officers; there might be complications if they were not appeased sufficiently so that they would not report to headquarters. "Look here! I lost my head a little, gents. That rum hit me pretty hard. If I apologize and hand you fifty dollars to pay for those rifles will you say that we have broken about even? If I had more than fifty I'd give it to you."

"We'll take what we can get. We need the money."

"One of you come and get it."

Wallin, desiring to show a new and friendly spirit, set his gun against a tree and drew his wallet.

"That's right! You needn't be nervous," protested the officer, on his way from the shore. "We'll call it a trade—mum on both sides. It's the best way out of a bad scrape."

The moment the heads of the two were together over the money Sabatis rose and lunged toward them, head low and body bent. He staggered as he ran, but the spirit of vengeance, love, and hatred poured through his veins and put the paralyzing numbness from him. The camp-fire had dwindled to coals and figures were hardly more than shadows, but the man at the canoe saw Paul's rush and shouted warning. At that moment the Indian leaped and, fists driving into the Canadian's back, smashed him against Wallin. The two went down together and Sabatis turned to meet the other man who came running. Paul used the officer's momentum to his own advantage; he ducked to one side, caught the plunging man by collar of jacket and slack of trousers and hurled him like boulder

from a catapult upon the two men who were struggling to rise. The three rolled down into a shallow ravine. Paul seized the rifle and tossed it to Dunos, who had rushed to take part in the fight. "Now you two can look out for yourselves! Help us! Keep 'em off!"

He did not speak to Lola. He swept her slight form into his arms and fled to the canoe which the officers had just launched. Behind them was uproar—shouts and groans and oaths. When he had placed her in the craft he jumped upon Wallin's canoe, upturned on the shore close by. He crushed the shell beyond hope of remedy; the sachem-canoe was out of commission and he did not harm it further. Standing in the captured craft, he paddled madly, turned the wooded headland, and kept on to the north.

"There was not room for all!" he gasped. "But they have the rifle. They can patch their canoe! It was desperate! There was no time!"

Then he seated himself and paddled on.

Lola had surrendered herself to him without struggle or word. She kneeled in the canoe, crouching low, fighting her terror.

"They have no canoe! Don't be afraid any longer. They cannot chase us."

"But we must wait for them—for Dunos and Peter."

He paddled sturdily. "It's better to keep on. There's no telling what may happen back there."

"But I need them. They are taking me a long way—into the north."

In that upheaval of his nature he was not in the mood to surrender her to anybody. What did this journey of hers mean? "I am as good as the two of them," he boasted, no longer the bashful youth who had been so

meek in her presence. "I am your friend, too. I will help."

"But I will not go—no, I cannot go with you—this way!"

"Are you afraid of me?" he asked, mournfully.

"You must understand. Then you will not wish to go. Stop! You must listen to me." She spoke with so much earnest appeal that he obeyed; he laid the paddle across the canoe and the little craft rocked on the slow waves.

"They were taking me to the shrine of Sainte Anne the Good."

"I will take you," he promised, gravely. "I can serve you better than they when you are there; one of the priests was my teacher in the college. He is my friend."

"It's not honest for me to take your help. I must tell you. I am going because the *curé* told me about the miracles. I am going because I want to ask the good saint to give me my husband and all his love. So you cannot help me."

He leaned forward, his cupped palms supporting his head. She waited a long time for him to speak.

"I could not ask you to help me, Paul."

"Once I pledged my word that I would help. I went and did my best. But it was not help—it was harm because the man lied before them all—lied and said that I was your lover. I'm telling you the truth, Lola. I don't know what you have heard. But it was the man who talked—who lied. Because I did not help you then I will do so now. Give me leave to help you. I beg it."

"After what I have said to you?"

"Yes."

"I don't understand."

"I explained to you once. I have not changed since then. It's a poor friend who will not stick fast in deep trouble. But I'm selfish. I want to do it alone. Don't you know that you can depend on me and trust me?"

"Yes, I do know it, Paul."

"Because we are going together—just we two—this is no time for the folly of talk about that between us."

"But is it folly because I want to go—do you think that?"

"It is not folly when we do all we can to cure unhappiness. Most would call this folly—what I want to do. But I have been unhappy because I harmed you instead of helped you. We will go. It will be good for both of us."

He dipped his paddle and drove the canoe on to the north.

With the reddening light of dawn to help his vision in scrutiny of the wooded shore, he found his own canoe and his belongings; then they went on again. Lola said nothing more about waiting for Dunos and Peter; she did not look behind to see whether they were following. Despite Paul's protest, she took the bow paddle and helped to hurry.

CHAPTER XXVI

The end of a pilgrimage and the guardian shield of the black robe.

THERE were huntsmen's cabins and loggers' camps in the wilderness; farther on there were settlers' clearings along the streams of L'Islet. The two pilgrims found shelter and welcome and food as they made their best haste down from the mounts of Notre Dame toward the great river.

There were streams and little lakes to help and hurry them; there were carries and cliffs and crooked trails to harass and make progress slow.

The clearings grew wider and then there were pastures and rolling fields, and the little whitewashed houses had broad eaves which made a porch, and had balconies running across the upper story. Within each house were many children about the high iron stove.

As brother and sister, Paul and Lola journeyed. That matter-of-fact relationship, announced unassumingly, was never questioned.

There were days when the sun was benignant and the sky was boundless. The girl looked up into it gladly, as if her hopes were winging high in the azure expanse.

There were days when gray clouds were packed close to the tops of the hills and sheets of sleety rain narrowed the horizon. And then Lola was grave and timidly stole glances at Paul, seeming to question him with her eyes,

and he did not understand her thoughts because she put none of them into words. As for him, he was the same whether the sunshine sparkled in his eyes or the rain pellets beat against his cheeks. He was placid, patient, silent, impassive, inscrutable. There was no more talk between them regarding their errand.

They came to villages and populous towns which were threaded on broad highways. A *habitant* farmer squinted shrewdly, scratched his head, and named a modest fee for conveyance to the shore of the St. Lawrence. The fuzzy little Norman horse trotted away, drawing a sway-ing buckboard wagon. The farmer's youngster went as their charioteer and continually clapped the reins and made the whip whistle over his head and cried, in high-pitched voice: "*Va t'en! Heh! Marche donc!*"

And, at last, they looked upon the great river, a wide expanse of tumbling waters swept by the cold wind. From the deck of the ferry-boat Paul pointed out to Lola the gray bulk of the twin-towered church of La Bonne Ste. Anne. It was so far away that it seemed like a mere bas-relief against the brown, steep background of the Côte de Beaupré.

They were landed at the end of a long pier down which streamed jostling throngs, embarking on a steamboat.

"They are pilgrims," Paul told her, for she showed timidity and waited at the pier's guard-rail for them to pass; many were laughing loudly and others pushed and skylarked. "They come like this in big parties from down the river before the winter closes in—from Tadou-sac and Trois Pistoles and all the way between. Because they laugh and play you must not mind. They are good folks. It ought to give you courage to see them coming away so happy from the shrine."

But the spectacle of so many strangers disturbed her; when she and Paul had made their way up the pier other chattering crowds were pouring from the cars of a railroad train. In hurrying platoons, like rafts in a river, they were swinging into the courtyard which stretched before the basilica's gray façade. The pilgrims on the pier had been humbler folk than these who came from the train. Here were no wicker baskets for food, no clumping boots, no knitted hoods. They were city folks, smartly dressed. Runners from the village inns pounded on the iron fence which kept them from the yard, and their clamors added to the general din.

"But you must not mind them," urged Paul, taking her hand in his. "They are folks who have made money in the mills in the States and they are glad because they are here for a blessing."

On the tables of a long arcade the family parties had spread their food and were eating; hawkers and venders of relics and souvenirs, of crosses and cards, were calling from their booths. Around the fountain in the center of the court were men and women who were filling bottles with water; after the water had been blessed, Paul told her, it would be taken to far homes; and a few drops would sanctify the cold brow of death or bless the opening eyes of birth. Overhead the bell clanged its call to Mass—the Mass for the arriving excursionists.

Lola, on her journey, hurrying, hoping, dreaming, had hung only one picture in the gallery of her fancy: the dim sanctuary, the good saint high on her pedestal with the Infant Christ in her arms, and, over all, a holy, brooding silence, as if the Infant were asleep and the grandmother warned with finger on her lips.

This merchandizing, this chatter and clatter, clang of

bell and bang of sticks against the iron fence, this haste as if the mother of Mary had not all eternity for her uses, this crowding of the stolid man in muddy sabots against the mill-hand beau who was ushering past his sweetheart perked in her finery—it was strange, it was rather terrifying. She clung to Paul's comforting hand and, like a marveling child, tried to look everywhere at once.

Cassocked priests, heads bent in humility, passed on their errands. The basilica's half-hundred chapels of confessional were receiving the pilgrims who had newly arrived.

Suddenly Paul began to elbow the throng on his own account. He hurried Lola along. "It's Father Hedeau—my teacher—the good priest. I will ask for a word with him."

Father Hedeau's greeting furnished evidence that Paul had not exaggerated when he had said that the priest was a friend.

His graciousness extended to Lola when Paul explained that she had come as a pilgrim, seeking the blessing. "She has much to tell to you, Father Hedeau. She will tell it for herself."

"I will listen." Out of his understanding he guessed at the reason for her trepidation; she was looking at the throngs with timid side-glances. "But I shall be able to listen much better after the Mass when there are not so many people in the church. Come in an hour—the chapel of Saint Anthony, my daughter."

"Another word, Father Hedeau!" pleaded the young man. "I have told her that the Black Sisters often take into their care a girl who is alone. She will tell you why it's best she should stay with them. To be alone, in an inn, that would not be good for her."

"It would not be good! The Sisters will give her shelter." He went on his way.

"Now you will be cared for. You will be safe. But I will wait with you until it's time to go into the chapel."

"And then you're going away—away from here?" she asked, tremulously.

"You will do the nine days of prayer, as you said, eh?"

"Father Pierre—I don't just remember—but he spoke of the novena. If I am not patient and faithful the blessing may be denied."

"It's best to stay." He hesitated. "You know that I have much money now, Lola. It came from bad things and it ought to be spent to do good."

"I have my own money! Plenty!" she told him.

"At the end of the nine days I will come. We will go home that way!" He pointed to the train of cars. "The snows are due. To Quebec and then down the long railroad! And now, as for me, I have friends along the Côte. I will visit them," he lied. "I'll have a jolly time. It's gay up here with the young folks after all the harvests are in. I have been here before."

"I was going to tell you that you'd better not wait. That would be too selfish, after what you have done. But now—if you can be very jolly—that will be different."

"Oh yes! Altogether different." He said it curtly, carelessly, and looked over her head as if he felt a little impatience to be away from her troubles and off to pleasures of his own. "Don't think a second time about me, Lola. Give all your thought to the prayers to the good saint." Then there was a silence between them and it became an embarrassing silence.

"I know the ways of the pilgrims who come here for help," he suggested, in effort to relieve the situation.

"There are the holy stairs—the pilgrims climb them on their knees to show that their spirit is humble."

"The *curé* spoke of the stairs." Her eyes appealed meekly.

"Come and I will show you."

Out of the courtyard, past the booths of the merchandizers, they walked to the chapel on the hill, from the open porch of which rises the broad way of the Scala Santa. The stairs were crowded with men and women, climbing slowly on their knees, halting to say a prayer and to finger beads.

"I will wait here," he told her. "When you have climbed you will see narrow stairs where you may walk down."

She did not kneel to begin the ascent. She put her hand in his. To go alone with that throng was adventure too much for her. It was not mere foolish fear. The girl had plenty of her own sort of courage. But after her life on the island farm, and after the lonely silence of the wilderness through which she had come, this sudden immersion in the tide of humanity chilled her, numbed self-reliance while it woke her dread.

He knelt and drew her down upon the first stair. "I will go with you, Lola. I was forgetting for a moment that I have many sins of my own to be forgiven."

They went on with the others, dragging slowly from stair to stair, in silence, eyes downcast.

Beside them, before them, behind them, were sighs of those with burdens, mutterings of those with problems, moanings of those in woe. There were those whose pride went obviously with them up the stairs, and there were some who hurried with the perfunctory air of persons who perform a duty in deed but not in spirit; before the eyes

of all when they came to the top of the stairs was the waxen image of Christ before Pontius Pilate, picturing the humility of the Lord before his earthly judge.

Paul kept her hand in his, helping her to climb, and when they rose and followed the others down the narrow stairs they went hand in hand and walked in silence back to the church.

He led her in through the great door, for it was getting near to the time appointed by the priest. They tiptoed to one side of the nave in the open space. It was dusky where they stood; the afternoon was waning. But the distant altar was gloriously alight and against the gleam of the wonderful marble of the chancel's balustrade rose the pedestal and the heroic statue of La Bonne Ste. Anne, her tender eyes looking down on the face of Mary's Son.

Over the heads of the two wanderers from the woods glorious waves of organ music rolled and surged, and they felt a lift and a swing as they had felt the swaying of the canoe on slow waves. Then a distant voice intoned strange words. Worshipers went sidling, shuffling, creaking out.

"It is there—the Chapel of Saint Anthony." He released her hand. He pointed to the archway. "I hope, Lola, that what you may find there will make you happy."

"You are willing to come back—it will not trouble you—?"

"I am glad of the chance to visit near here and have a jolly time."

He turned from her and was gone so quickly that she choked back her adieu, afraid to speak aloud in that holy place.

She fought back an impulse, almost irresistible, to run after him, to beg him to stay. She was homesick and

terror was in her. She felt as if she had been tossed in an instant out of safety into black emptiness. She realized more fully how much his presence had signified.

Just inside the great door, near where she was standing, thatched one on the other, rose a great heap of crutches, wooden legs, trusses, and other lamentable impedimenta of human infirmities, jetsam from misfortune and tossed there in the joy of grateful pilgrims. Knowing that the tears were flooding her cheeks, feeling need of shelter from eyes for a few moments, she ran and hid herself behind the pathetic monument. She leaned her forehead against the tattered padding of a crutch and tried not to sob aloud. Then the fear lest delay might offend the priest enabled her to control herself and collect her courage. She went into the chapel, under the archway which Paul had pointed out, and kneeled before the confessional-box and gave her sorrows and her hopes into the keeping of Father Hedeau.

As for Paul and his poor fiction of joyful visits, he walked in the twilight to the outskirts of the village and found shelter in a small inn where he would be safely hidden; he gave money to pay for his lodging for nine days and nights.

And that night he went and walked in the shadows near the convent of the Franciscan Sisters and looked up at the dark windows.

He walked there the next night, during the two hours before midnight, when no observers were abroad. So he made his tour of vigil for the other seven nights, and on the ninth day he waited before the church door till she came forth from the dim sanctuary into the stir of the world outside.

Her lips were no longer pale and drooping and her eyes

were not heavy with unshed tears. She put forth her hand to him and smiled. "I am glad to see you again, Paul. I thank you for coming back."

"And I am glad to find that you are happier," he muttered; he showed no joy. "You have been answered, eh? You have found—you have heard—?"

"I have heard wise words and I have found much to help me. Perhaps I can't explain to you. I have been thinking what I would say. But now I find it hard to explain."

"I do not ask you to tell me anything. It's enough for me if you're happier."

"I have written to *père* and *mère*. The Sister Superior gave me her letter to send with mine."

"You have told them—?"

"Only that I am here—that I am safe."

"It was a good plan. The letter will be there ahead of you to smooth things. So now we start for home, eh?"

She shook her head. "I am going to stay here, Paul." She understood his expression where amazement mingled with protest. "No, not what you think. I am not fit for such holy service. They have asked me to stay and study so that I may know what I have never had a chance to learn. Your school—you are glad because you have much knowledge. Isn't that so?"

"It is good to learn. I am glad for you. But as for me, I am not making use of what I know. I ought not to have come back to the woods." Her eyes questioned him, but he did not tell her why he had come back; further confession of his love would serve no ends. At that moment he was without either hopes or dreams; he was mentally and spiritually prostrated. Even the mission he had planned on behalf of his people appeared to

be futile and foolish. Was not the coarse contempt of Wallin, brutally ignorant though he was, indication of what an Indian champion might expect to meet in the way of discouragement and rebuff?

"Paul, I told you that I have been thinking what I would say." This time she reached to him both her hands.

"If it's to give me any praise or thanks, please don't. You gave me leave to keep a promise and to ease my mind. It's ended."

"But after you are gone the words I can't speak now will come, choking me," she lamented.

"I know, Lola! But it's hard to talk about it. We don't need to say any more."

"But before you go away I want to tell you this—so that you may know how much help you have given me! I have found my blessing at the shrine! Look at me, Paul!" She raised appealing eyes and gave him earnest and unwavering gaze. "Just yet I don't understand well enough to tell you. Where the awful hurt was it's not there any more. When the good Sisters have made me wiser and have given me words for my thoughts I will know how to tell you—I will tell you! And every day when I think how the hurt has gone away I will see your good kind face and remember how you brought me to find my blessing." She withdrew her hands from his, stood on tiptoe, and brought down his face gently and kissed him. "Every morning, every night, a prayer for you, Paul! All the day good wishes for you. God keep you safe till then."

She ran away.

Along the narrow street two Black Sisters were passing on their way to the convent. One of them raised a wel-

coming arm and under the sable robe, as under a buckler of protection, the girl hid herself and walked away. He took infinite comfort in the spectacle.

When she had passed beyond the corner of the gray wall he went slowly into the church. It was empty and silent. He knelt near the pedestal and when he gazed up it seemed as if the good saint's eyes were looking down into his. His murmured prayer was a prayer of thanksgiving.

Out of his black despair a blessing had come to him as well as to her.

La Bonne Ste. Anne!

It was not a vain pilgrimage, that journey through the wilderness and down the broad Laurentian slope!

When he went forth from the church he found Dunos and Peter munching black bread in one of the stalls of the arcade.

"So you came along? I'm sorry you made so much trouble for yourselves. You ought to have known that you could depend on me!"

"We say Big Word to Noel the Bear."

"And you have just arrived?"

"Here three days," announced Dunos, laconically.

Paul, who had been hiding o' days in the tavern, knew why he had not seen the Indians.

"No sorry we come," declared Peter. "Must know she here safe. So we come to see. Come not fast as you. Stop to make sure you still ahead and all right."

"Here three days!" repeated Paul. "Does she know you're here?"

They wagged negative heads in unison.

"She has worried about you. She spoke often of you. You should have let her know."

Dunos explained that they had hidden themselves daily and watched the doors of the church; they knew her comings and her goings. They knew that she was safe behind the walls of the convent on the hill. But no, they had not presumed to speak to her! She had told them on the way up the Toban that she was to stay nine days.

They had felt that she might not like to have it known that she had Indians for friends and relatives, stated Peter. They had prudently kept out of her sight, waiting till they could see Paul; they had guessed that he would come to the church that day—the last day.

"You are good men," said Sabatis, moisture in his eyes. "She is proud of you as her friends. But you and I can do her no more service just now. She will stay here for a time. The good Sisters will fill her head with knowledge. She has written to her father and all is right."

They showed no surprise. "Yes! So now we go," was Peter's meek comment.

"Go now to trap," said Dunos. He pointed to the cloud-bank in the south. "Snow come there! Fur soon be thick."

"I shall stay in the woods for a time. I'll go with you. I suppose I'm now an outlaw, according to Wallin's say." Paul made grimace of disgust. "Did you have any more trouble with the renegade?"

"Huh! No trouble. No can make trouble. Two men jump on him. Head split, arm near twist off, leg broke. No walk—only talk! Talk much. Them two bad skunks like him take him off to—to—you call him hos-pittle."

"I hope he will have to stay in that hospital for the

rest of his life," growled the young man, not realizing that the fulfilment of that wish in behalf of the enemy would bring to Mr. Wallin a future of joy unalloyed.

Sabatis led the way from the yard and the Indians followed, treading in his steps, one behind the other.

CHAPTER XXVII

Kenneth Marthorn finds that something is wrong in the north country, but the something is elusive.

"**L**ORD BATEMAN'S mill," woods metaphor for the winter skies, ground early and plentiful grist that year; wallowing through the deep snow, the axmen, the "gashing fiddlers" who manned the crosscut saws, the swamper, the teamsters toiled in the gathering of the winter harvest.

Clare went home to Ste. Agathe before the snows came. She had made herself familiar with the layout of every operation, she had visited all the camps, she had established personal relations with the various bosses and had arranged for a system of reports by which she would be able to grasp the details of the undertakings of the X. K. Under those circumstances she knew that she could administer more effectually from the home office. Furthermore, Miss Clare Kavanagh was humanly feminine and owned up to herself that even the zest of achievement had not won her to fond regard for heavy boots, high gaiters, and shaggy jackets. So she went home and realized a vision that had been teasing her—herself in a house frock, curled in a big chair in front of her fireplace, and, of course, fixed out with a good story and a box of chocolates.

Somehow it seemed like a stolen pleasure and was the sweeter. A bit of self-reproach spiced it. It was all very stimulating to be the head of the X. K., very grand to feel so much responsibility! But to be in front of the fire with book and candy was being just a girl and Miss Kavanagh frankly acknowledged that she liked it. She looked out of the window into the whirling storm and thought upon how the winds must be shouting across the frozen Ebeemah and bellowing up the flinty gorge of the Abol, the mental vision heightened her comfort. She felt like a truant, and the feeling put a keen edge on her enjoyment.

In this return to the amenities, in this rediscovery of her gentler nature, she was peculiarly gratified when Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wheldon Appleton accepted her invitation to spend a part of their honeymoon at Ste. Agathe, in order to taste winter fully flavored and to enjoy its sports.

Tim Mulkern bossed the making of a snow-banked toboggan-slide from the rear of the Kavanagh mansion into the valley; he flooded a field to give surface for an ice-rink. He made snow-shoes for the expected guests and "filled" the frames with a special net of thongs of his own curing. He made skees and sandpapered prop-poles.

Engineer Marthorn stayed on in the woods. The frozen waters favored certain construction work which was the outcome of the plans of the survey. He could have delegated the direction of this work to subordinates, without prejudice to the Temiscouata interests. But Mr. Kenneth Marthorn was conscious of no special hankering for city amusements; on the contrary, he was wholly absorbed by something in the woods which was not amusing. He was not understanding just what it was all about. Engrossing mysteries in one's affairs are often agreeable;

Engineer Marthorn was finding his own puzzle to be devilishly irritating. Something was wrong; something was hidden; something was operating against his efforts to straighten out affairs along the upper Toban. But when he sought for actualities and explanations he had an exasperating sense of failure; he told himself that he felt like a blind man grabbing for eels.

The lawyer and the engineer whom Donald Kezar had secured for the X. K. were amiable persons, but they seemed to have a curious lack of initiative. After one conference the lawyer went back to the city, promising to handle his part of the X. K. affairs from that end, the engineer was a preoccupied individual with a far-away look of leisure in his eyes, but with a wonderful propensity for keeping on the gallop from one point to another in the section. Kenneth, whenever he sought a conference in regard to some matter of co-operation, found Engineer C. Pitt Haines as elusive as a flea in his flittings, and when he had been caught, then that far-away look in the eye positively refused to be captured; that was the irritated feeling of Kenneth in the matter.

Second Vice-president Donaldson had settled in the Toban as general field director—and there was no far-away look in that gentleman's eye! Mr. Donaldson was not obtrusive and he exhibited a fine, large, offhand manner of keeping his nose out of Mr. Kenneth's professional business; but the chief engineer had the continuous and uneasy impression that Mr. Donaldson was there to watch and was watching most keenly.

Every now and then Mr. Donaldson went over Mr. Marthorn's head in the matter of commands. Most of the instances were minor ones, but they all tended toward the same thing—selfish aggrandizement of the Temis-

couata without promise of co-operation to protect the rights of others on the river.

Mr. Marthorn, seeing what the sum-resultant would amount to in the end, demurred; but Mr. Donaldson politely and volubly explained that he would not presume to meddle in any really vital matter, but the other directors did expect him to safeguard the company interests; there could be arrangements for compromise when the interests had been protected.

The cursed feature was, so Kenneth reflected, that the whole proposition was so slippery. To make a stand on a minor point would appear like disloyalty to his company in order to help rivals; he could not afford to have gossip or opinion developing the suspicion that he was endeavoring to show especial partiality for Clare Kavanaugh. Desiring to keep tongues quiet, he did not venture to come to an open split with the field director. But he could look ahead to a state of affairs in which the undoing of the X. K. might be involved because certain measures had not been checked at their inception.

And he had given her his man's promise!

He found his situation nigh intolerable.

He began to brood and to worry.

That lawyer of the X. K.! There were, to be sure, injunctions by the court on certain work, but how long and how well would those injunctions hold? It was a matter where legal ability must count—honesty and sagacity as well!

The engineer of the far-away look and the up-and-away habit had built on paper and by word o' mouth some wonderful works for the conservation of the property of the X. K. But the works did not appear to be getting far beyond the blue-print stage.

Kenneth's toil on the survey had been arduous and constant. When the worry added its burden he became conscious that he did not feel physically fit. He was weak, moody, and irritable. He was afraid of what he might say to Donaldson. His father—the head office—must be made to understand the matter thoroughly—more thoroughly than they had grasped the situation in the conference at Sebomuk Farm.

Something was decidedly wrong with his physical condition—he ought to consult a physician, he decided.

Though the amusements of the city had not availed to call him forth from the woods, his increasing worry about himself and about affairs started him for home at last—and he went by the way of Ste. Agathe!

Before that time Donald Kezar had found good excuse for a special trip to Ste. Agathe; he went down from the woods to make a deal in beef for the X. K.'s crews. He was still in the village when Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wheldon Appleton arrived and he was made troubled and angry. Here were folks of the high and mighty sort—the folks she had known outside the woods. When, arriving in Ste. Agathe, he had hurried up to the mansion and had found her in the big chair before the fire, book in hand and candy close by, he had surveyed her with some wonderment and with fresh respect. In her gaiters and corduroy there had been a hint of the masculine about her; at home, amid the elegancies which Kavanagh had put into his mansion, she was inexpressible contrast to the rude milieu from which Kezar had come and in which he passed most of his time. Daintiness, charm, the aloofness of a maid with money and position—he resented it!

She was different, all of a sudden!

And when the Appletons came his resentment deepened. He was surlily aware that he would be no special adornment for a house party, and he could not expect that Clare would entreat him to quit his job and settle down for a Christmas holiday in Ste. Agathe. But the knowledge that he was something she could easily dispense with, when it came to her affairs outside the woods, wrenched his temper in ugly fashion. Was it not likely that these smart folks from the city would turn her thoughts from the interests of the north country and from the folks of the north country?

When he had finished his business with the man from the beef-house and had no further excuse for remaining in Ste. Agathe, he went up to the mansion to receive any commands or commissions. He was not able to hide his sour rebelliousness when he was alone with her.

"What is wrong, Donald?"

"Everything is all wrong."

"In my business or yours?"

"It's more or less bound up together! I'll tell you one special thing that's wrong! That Marthorn sneak is going to double-cross you. I warned you of it. I warn you again."

Kezar spoke with heat and emphasis; he was serving two purposes—he was satisfying his hatred and he was building backfire of accusation which would serve in destroying evidences of his own treachery in act and in intent. He was looking ahead to certain plans of his for the future.

"If I am deceived in regard to Mr. Marthorn, I'll take the consequences, Donald."

"I'm not going to mince matters, Clare. I'm talking for the X. K. right now! I'm doing my best to keep

everything moving, but the men are not taking hold as they used to when your father was there on the job. The head of the X. K. ought to be in the woods," he blurted, jealousy urging him.

"I think I can take care of matters by my present method," she returned, stiffly. But the guilty feeling that she was minding comfort rather than duty troubled her.

"I don't say but what you can attend to all the business while you are down here. But the point is, mere bosses don't get results. Clare, I'm coming out with it. I can't keep it back! Think what I could do up there if I had authority as—as—your husband! You haven't allowed me to talk love to you. But I know you don't hate me! Won't you marry me and let me love you and work for you and carry all the load?"

Her composure was not disturbed. She fronted him with grave, kindly, and candid demeanor. "Donald, I'm sorry, but I cannot do that."

"But I've been hoping—"

"And I have been weak and wrong in letting things drift along as they have. I'll be honest with you, Donald. I was hoping in my own way. I found you kind and good. I hoped that some day I'd know that I loved you enough to be your wife."

"And you know now that you don't love me?"

"As a friend—yes!"

"And you have made up your mind for good and all?"

"I have. I ought to have done so before. I ask you to forgive me, but I wanted to make sure. It distresses us both. Let's never speak of it again."

Kezar had discounted that decision long before; he was not conscious that he was grieved when she told him

what he had already told himself. The jealous impulse to check up a certainty had driven him to make this last appeal. "It's all right!" he said, without emotion. "I'll go back to my job." He walked out quickly, leaving her more troubled by his apparent humility than she would have been by his reproaches.

The young man did not go to his grandfather and confess failure. He kept his mouth resolutely shut and started up-river. He was not concerned any more with mere plans for "making her sick of her job." He nursed a grudge that was sole and elemental and which was without definite plan.

He met Kenneth Marthorn on the bushed-way across the dead-water; the tote team of the Temiscouata ticked the side of Kezar's sledge in passing. But, though the young men were so close together that the frosty vapor of their breaths mingled, they did not speak.

Circumstances of mutual concern justified Kenneth in seeking an interview with Miss Kavanagh as soon as he arrived in Ste. Agathe, and he presented himself. The presence of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wheldon Appleton and their exuberant greeting put Kenneth's call outside the pale of mere business. He was invited by Clare to dine with them.

When he found opportunity to confide to her his uneasiness in regard to conditions on the upper Toban he added bravely that she should put all worry away from her. "I am going directly to the home office. I have given you my pledge of co-operation and you can depend on my promise."

"I do," she assured him, earnestly.

So they parted. She had found him grave, reserved.

Mrs. Appleton, having a knack for probing, had made

him own up that he had been working too hard; that explanation was needed to reconcile her to his new and strange gravity.

"I never knew Kennie Marthorn to be like that before," she told Clare, gazing after him as he plodded down the hill in the moonlight, on his way to the tavern. "He looks and acts more than a thousand years old. And he was usually so witty and funny at dinners! I suppose that marriage thing was a dreadful setback to his pride. But I didn't realize it could make him into a combination of suffering Job and venerable Methuselah."

Miss Kavanagh offered no comment.

"I suppose you know that he really wasn't married, after all."

Clare turned quick, sharp, and disconcerting gaze on her friend.

"That is to say," explained the news monger, "the woman was a silly creature who was already married. Bob found out all about it—quite by accident, of course!"

The stare was more disconcerting. "Kavvy, it's simply impossible to lie to you when you train those big eyes on a fellow that way!" exploded Mrs. Appleton.

Mr. Appleton, having a real juvenile relish for stories, had gone out into the log-walled wing for a smoke and a bedtime yarn from Dumphy, who had been encouraged by Mr. Appleton's apparent guilelessness to lie most atrociously.

"Bob began with the hotel where she had been living, and started out to trace her. He's perfectly fiendish when he gets set on a thing. And here's who she is and all about it!"

When the story was finished Clare's interest, to judge from her few words on the subject, seemed concerned

merely with the fact that Mr. Bob had been sufficiently interested to journey all the way to Omaha.

"Oh, that's the way Bob goes at anything when he's bound and determined. Yes, he went right out there and after a time he found a chance to talk with her, for she remembered him. You've got to 'fess up that Kennie has been just splendid, after she made such a fool out of him. And I don't believe he cared much about her, deep down. That woman told Bob she didn't believe that Kenneth was really in love with her. He wouldn't elope or help her get a divorce or anything."

"That woman must be a fool," said Clare, hotly.

"Why, I have said that she is! Bob and I think it's perfectly proper for us to set Kenneth's friends right. So we're doing it," declared Harriet Appleton, with fine assumption of virtuous resolve. "Help your friends! That's a good motto for all. Bob even went all the way to Omaha to help Kenneth. That's the kind of a friend he is!"

Then Miss Kavanagh switched the conversation to another topic, giving the impression that further discussion of Kenneth Marthorn's affairs rather bored her.

The son's welcome home was all that a son could desire. It was warm.

But the interview of the Temiscouata's chief engineer with the Temiscouata's president was distinctly unsatisfactory. It was hot.

The engineer was bluntly referred back to Mr. Donaldson, who was in charge of the field details.

"Let's see! I believe that it was your suggestion that I'd better get away from all up-country details," said the president, acridly. "I have done so. I refuse absolutely

to interfere with Mr. Donaldson. He is on the ground and he knows what he is doing!"

"The sum-total of his plans means doing up the X. K."

"I am not informed on that point. I only know that our interests must be taken care of."

"I was given the right to act. I have promised the X. K. co-operation and compromise."

"You had no right to give promises to business competitors."

"I did have, in this instance. I have given my promise. I'll see to it that the promise is kept."

"I'll have no more of your d—d folly! Not another word!" shouted Colonel Marthorn.

Kenneth went out of the presence, white under his tan and trembling in his weakness.

He decided that he would hurry back to the north country. A fight, man-sized, seemed to be waiting for him up there. He was no longer dabbling in quixotic fancies. He was grimly resolved that the Temiscouata should not be dragged into operations which would, in the end, react on the doers. Donaldson was satisfying a belated grudge against a dead man; the president of the Temiscouata had turned his back in order that he might not observe.

Again Kenneth's worries took possession of him. Yes, there was something wrong in the upper Toban!

But there was something wrong with him, too!

He went to his club and sent for his physician.

Three days later he was in a hospital.

Typhoid fever finds easy prey when the body is worn by fatigue and the brain is harassed by worries.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Tim Mulkern wakes up and continues so intensely awake that he becomes very troublesome to certain gentlemen with plans.

CONSIDERING the fact that Engineer C. Pitt Haines bobbed around so industriously in the upper Toban, it was inevitable that he would come into frequent contact with Second Vice-president Donaldson—and the contact did not produce any belligerent sparks! It may have been that the far-away look in Mr. Haines's eyes was a sort of long-distance, prophetic vision and that he could see the Temiscouata with its mills and its money growing greater all the time while the X. K., bossed by a girl, dwindled and died.

At any rate, it was not long before Engineer Haines had a much better understanding with the Temiscouata field director than he had with the field boss of the X. K.

As a matter of fact, Donald Kezar had not opened up his heart to the engineer except in a rather vague and unsatisfactory way; he had handed to Haines a packet of money and had hinted that the engineer need not get too busy on any plans suggested by Marthorn.

Mr. Donaldson was a great deal more outspoken after he had sounded Haines and had found out that Kezar,

too, was far from enthusiastic in regard to the Marthorn kind of co-operation.

Mr. Donaldson had his own brand of co-operation.

He had Mr. Haines co-operating very soon.

Then he got in the way of Donald Kezar, and the two of them lied to each other and mutually knew that they were lying in order to gloss treachery so that it would not appear too hateful, but the result was more co-operation of the Donaldson brand.

In spite of his ugly rage, it was not the intent of Donald to ruin utterly Clare's business. But his intellect was not of the sort that could grasp and group causes in order to determine the general and probable effect. His vision was not like that of Kenneth Marthorn. It was enough for Donald when he found that Donaldson was ready to cut under young Marthorn—and that meant that the engineer's compact with Clare would be discredited and that Kenneth would appear to be the sneak Kezar had declared him to be. When Kenneth had been smirched and Clare had been cowed and disheartened it would then be time to push the Kavanagh interests again!

And then Clare found herself wondering what was happening to the X. K.!

Men, independent operators, mill-owners, stumpage-buyers kept coming to her, protesting, alarmed, suspicious, fumbling their contracts and wagging their heads when she assured them that she did not intend to sell out the X. K. interests. But the other propaganda was continued vigorously; men did not seem to be convinced that the X. K. would not be swallowed up. They wanted to cast their lot with the forces that were in chief control of the Toban interests. They were slacking up their activity until they were assured of something definite.

The X. K. seemed to be slacking up, too! Good men were hired away by Donaldson. They believed the stories he told them. He was a firm advocate of the tongue instead of the fist. He was the vigorous personality behind the propaganda which was causing Clare so much anxiety. Whenever he invented a new story he noted its course and the effect with all the delight of a successful marksman watching a target.

Many of the X. K. horses pawed the hovel floor restlessly and ate oats in idleness because teamsters were cajoled by Donaldson. Men seemed to have come to the conclusion that there was room for only one big concern on the river, and that the Great Temiscouata, with its roots firm fixed in Wall Street, would own all, must own all.

Tim Mulkern had a certain perspicacity of his own when it came to matters of the woods. By questioning the men who straggled into Ste. Agathe from up the river he secured information that was rather vague, but it was disquieting. Of Clare's new anxiety he had ocular proof.

After the departure of the Appletons she made preparations to go up-country to do what she could in the way of straightening out the X. K.'s affairs.

Then Tim Mulkern awoke.

"Rosie, girl," he said, cuddling his wife's head in the hook of his elbow, "old John said that it would spoil me if I married a slip of a girl. He said it would make a fool of me. But, darlin', listen! It's meself that has turned meself into a fool. They have the right to laugh at me behind my back. 'Fore God, I have had neither reason nor right to act as I have with ye! Ye're good and true and I'm loving ye now with a better kind of love. And

I love the colleen that old John left behind him. She's going north to try to find out what's amiss. But it's not the job for her."

"No, it's not, Tim! It must be cold and wild and rough up in the woods!" She shivered.

"It's all that and worse. And so she must stay in the big house whilst I go north and nose about among the scalawags for her sake." He looked up. "I hope old John forgives me for being a traitor so long!"

He took Rosie with him when he went to Clare with his proffer of service. "And as *I* say, so *she* says, and the both of us say it, Miss Clare. I have been asleep and not in my right senses. Rosie has forgiven me. When I find out who is hurting the old X. K. I'll come and ask you, too, to forgive me."

"I have never blamed you, Tim! I know how much you love Rosie."

"Yes, but it's a better kind of love now, as I have told her. It was mighty selfish and poor love before."

In that spirit Mulkern went north!

Clare accepted him gratefully; her good sense made her conscious of her own limitations; Mulkern could delve more effectually than she.

But Tim Mulkern, after he had been long enough in the upper Toban to get his feet placed, did not confine himself to collecting information. In disgust he gave up trying to fix the blame; he found lies and general slipperiness. He went to work to remedy matters as best he could and, having been John Xavier Kavanagh's principal understudy for many years, he did not bother with any complicated system of readjustment; he proceeded quite after the Kavanagh two-fisted methods and began to get results.

When Donald Kezar got in the way of this obstreperous invader of authority and demanded an explanation he got none; Mulkern wasn't sure just what he himself amounted to in the personnel of the X. K. He had hurried away from Ste. Agathe and Clare had not given him special orders; she did not understand the situation well enough to give any orders. Therefore Mr. Mulkern bluntly told Mr. Kezar—meeting the field boss at the Whirlingstone ramdown, during a blizzard—to go to a place where snowstorms are said never to happen and then he kept right on getting results in his own way.

And, after a time, noting what the Temiscouata was about in the way of amplifying their hold-dams and in other construction work, Mr. Mulkern—in no way a timid person—went to Second Vice-president Donaldson. "I don't know what the law is going to say after the law has all been fixed up—and they tell me that the 'know-all-men' sharps are scratching their old heads now and fixing the law—but let me tell you something, Mr. Donaldson, sir! The X. K. drive was on this river before any of your popple jackstraws was ever wet in the Toban. That drive has always had free way to the sorting-boom. If now ye propose to put aught in its honest path, what ye put there will—" The dynamite boss set end of thumb against forefinger and flipped the thumb. It was a modest little gesture, but Mr. Mulkern had the faculty of making a listener believe that Mr. Mulkern would do exactly what he said he would do. "I understand *it* and *it* understands *me*," added the boss.

And then Mr. Mulkern went on with his own affairs and sometimes, so aptly and thoroughly had he understudied "Old X. K.," men jumped and looked scared when they heard the Mulkern voice.

Field director of the Temiscouata and field boss of the X. K. had several conferences. But on account of Kezar's misty conception of Mulkern's status and on account, also, of an unwillingness to own up to anybody that Mulkern was considerable of a mystery in the X. K. economy, the conferences were not satisfactory. But Mr. Kezar, being pressed, admitted that Mulkern always did what he said he would do—and was an uncontrollable sort of a chap who would do 'most anything when it was a case of fighting for the X. K. "He's butting in on what's no business of his, Mr. Donaldson! If it wasn't for killing a couple of good horses I'd sluice him down the snubbing-slope some fine day when he's out there damning the crew."

Mr. Donaldson put up his protesting hand and looked distressed. "Brutal, brutal, Kezar! Mustn't talk that way! We're business men, not buccaneers! In business we must never do anything that's against the law. By the way, I have been making inquiries during the past few weeks. I am told by a couple of our foresters that they overheard talk in Sainte Agathe to the effect that Mulkern's wife is rather light in her ways and that he is jealous."

"She's young and he's jealous—but I don't think he has any reason to be suspicious."

"You know nothing against her?"

"No."

"I'm sorry for that—but we'll not despair. In the mean time we'll do nothing whatever but what's strictly according to law."

And then Mr. Donaldson sat down with his thoughts.

He was in no especial hurry; he put plenty of time on his new plan of propaganda. He enjoyed himself, always,

in building a story mentally, whittling a deadly shaft and feathering it with slander and tipping it with poison. This time he did not note the fact that he was making a boomerang instead of an arrow.

It was necessary to get Mulkern out of the woods without force—to get him out and keep him out! To get him out before the spring drive started.

Mr. Donaldson had absolute faith in his system. There was no brutal violence about it which could harm the business name of the Great Temiscouata. It was merely a matter of killing a man's faith, hopes, peace, devotion—only the ruin of a little home! Mr. Donaldson was quite sure that Mulkern would be out of the woods when the drive started, and that he would stay out of the woods. Still, however, the field director failed to note that what he was fashioning was a boomerang.

It is natural that men who hit the up-trail should bring along the current gossip of down-country. Gossip is welcomed in the woods.

Weeks passed before Tim Mulkern even tried to guess why men looked at him as they did—side-glances, eyebrows lifted, quizzical grin. Rumor fluffy as snowflakes in the March thaw of a few days was a long time in crystallizing into anything like hard and fast declaration. Many men had come from down-river, many men had whispered. Before Mulkern guessed at what it all meant even the pines and the spruces seemed to be murmuring it to one another as they leaned their tufted heads together in the driving winds. The burden of the gossip was that Tim's wife had gone wrong!

He had come into the north with a little ache in his heart in spite of his brave declaration to her. She had seemed to be so childishly pleased because he was going.

To be sure, the natural explanation was that she was proud when he had volunteered to take Clare's burden on his broad shoulders. But—

There was that devilish thing which kept stirring in him!

For he did not understand women, and he had pondered and wondered and suspected motives and was in fear; the gray was in his hair, but the tumult in his heart was that of rash youth—for he was loving for the first time—loving with the jealous greed that questions acts and thoughts continually. In all the texture of his passion was fear—the fear of a man who feels that he has won more than his deserts from good fortune. He realized, with all the years dividing him from Rosie, that he had not been able to see into the depths of her young heart.

He was sure that men were looking at him with suggestive narrowings of their eyes!

He heard mumble of voices after he had passed.

All this might come from the resentment of men who had been cursed by their taskmaster; but holding a grudge because they were kept busy was not the habit of the workers of the X. K. Tim Mulkern was not satisfied.

He was back again in the wild life—and of old he had sneered at love and trust in a woman. The wild life had been long—and the home life had been short. She had not said one word to keep him from leaving her—she had not hinted even by a tear that she wanted him to stay!

As often as he had opportunity he studied his grim face and grizzled beard in the mirror, or glanced at it reflected in the ice of a frozen pool. Could a handsome girl really love such a man?

He realized that faith in himself and trust in her were

leaving him. And there was malice in the air. He couldn't hear the words they mumbled, but he felt as if the words were biting his back. Still he kept on with his tasks, unable to deal her the insult, in his thoughts, of believing that these men were talking about his wife.

Fury of another sort was inspired in him suddenly.

The Great Temiscouata set off its first blast in the outlet of the upper Ebeemah!

It was explained that this was not for the purpose of using the outlet for the drive; on account of the sharp pitches the outlet had never been considered available. Men had tried to drive there by building sluices on the steep descents, but in high water the logs jumped out of the sluices and were scattered and hung up.

Mulkern sought out Donaldson and asked some profane questions; the X. K. man refused to be satisfied with the explanation that the Temiscouata needed more water for its storage basin and that the blanket charter enabled it to take that water from Ebeemah. "It may be fine for you, but it will be hell for us! It don't go!"

"The court has removed the injunction. We are within our rights," retorted the field director.

"I don't know what's an injunction. I didn't mind when it was put on; if it has been taken off, then there's one more fool thing out of the way. But it's about removing the ledge that God Almighty put there that I'm talking. The lip o' that ledge holds our water for the honest drive for the lower outlet."

"We shall go on."

"With your blasting?"

"With our blasting."

"Before I came here I packed my old canned-thunder croker-sack in the depot-camp. Store your water, say

ye? By the war-club of old Brian Boru, I'll make sieves of your dams!"

"And wind up in state prison!"

"No, sir! Not when the wise law boys know why it was done."

Mr. Donaldson blinked. It was evident that the possibility of having the matter of provocation and reprisals opened up in court was not an alluring prospect.

"So let it stand like that," suggested Mulkern, fiercely. "Go on with your blasting."

Mr. Donaldson pondered.

The drills in the ice-bound gorge of the upper outlet were stilled.

Mr. Donaldson pondered further.

The tongues of the upper Toban were not stilled.

And there came a day when Mulkern reached the point where he could endure the malice of the thing no longer. It had wrapped itself about him like some slimy, venomous creature; he had the mad desire to break its hold. There was horror in him—the horror that came with the awakening knowledge that they were talking about his wife. That they could find words of shame to say about her! The thought made him almost a maniac.

He hid in the dark bunk in the sleeping-camp at the Sickie-hook and waited till the men came back from their supper; they sucked their pipes and a man fiddled industriously and a nimble French-Canadian danced a jig on a block that had been sawed from a tree-butt. There were noise and chatter, but at last he heard some of the words which before had been mumblings behind his back.

He leaped out among them. In his hand he swung a dynamite sack with its ominous stripings of red. "Damn your lying souls! You've been having it over behind

my back long enough. Now out with it! Out with it, you sneaking pups! Out with it!" He screamed his command.

The fiddle, a singer, all the voices were stilled.

"Out with it, I say! It's about my wife. If you're lying about her, against the stove this goes! If ye're not lying, I'm saving it for somebody else."

Their single impulse was to save themselves by the method this wild man had offered. With starting eyes they eyed him and his sack. With white lips, one after another, they told him. They gabbled eagerly, trying to take the curse off themselves, trying to turn his mind to another victim. They did not brand their statements as rumor. At that moment they were cowards without a redeeming trait. They swore that they were giving facts, not lies. Such was the desperate fervor of their self-exculpation that, at last, they knew that they had beaten conviction through his maniacal rage.

He drove his arm through the loop of the sack and swung the burden upon his shoulder. He strode out of the camp.

The cowards sighed and gazed at one another, swapping mutely shamed congratulation, feeling that they had missed death by a hair.

"He bluffed us into it," muttered one of the cowards. "He wouldn't have thrown it. He'd have gone to hell along with us, and he doesn't want to do that!"

"It's Mulkern's way to do what he says—and think it over later. He isn't afraid of the stuff. He would have thrown it. We may have done the woman dirt. But we had ourselves to look out for."

After a time they heard the jangle of his jumper bells.

They looked forth and saw him crossing the lake in the white night. The horses were running.

"He's hitting the trail for home," gasped an onlooker.

They went back to the deacon-seats and sat and stared at the floor in silence; their countenances were like those of men awaiting sentence for murder.

CHAPTER XXIX

In saving a life Kenneth Marthorn does something which causes a man to lose his wits.

KENNETH MARTHORN was almost unmanageable during the delirium of his illness; he raved about a pledge that had been given and a duty that he must perform. It was necessary to bind him upon his bed with canvas strips.

During his fractious convalescence he was almost unmanageable, too! He gave little heed to the protests of his physician. His constant worry slowed his recovery. By trying to keep all news and business from him they who attended him aggravated his distemper. He wanted to know what was going on in the upper Toban. Colonel Marthorn, making daily visits, assured him that everything was all right, but the colonel resolutely refused to discuss any details. Business talk was forbidden by the doctor's orders, so the father declared, he did not propose to be a contributory party in causing Kenneth to suffer a setback!

But Kenneth did have the setback. In spite of all anybody could say he insisted on leaving the hospital. That folly brought him back in short order; he had suffered a serious relapse while he was rushing his preparations for his journey back to the Toban.

In chastened mood he set himself to the task of getting

well; a serious and resolute mind is a good physician, and a firm intent is an efficient nurse.

But it was late in the winter, and the March winds were hushing their shrieks to spring-welcoming cooings when he stepped foot once more in Ste. Agathe.

After he had toiled up the snowy hill to the Kavanagh mansion he was considerably disconcerted during the first part of his interview with Clare. The depth of her solicitude astonished him. She looked honestly frightened when she saw his pallor and his weakness. He had much trouble in convincing her that he was really able to be about. Then she gave him sympathy with Celtic impulsiveness—with so much warmth that he was embarrassed. He had never before detected in her any sympathetic interest in him. But there was no discounting this new and friendly candor of hers; those big gray eyes were filled with honest concern.

Later, during their talk, those eyes were misty; Clare told him as best she was able about the mysterious and malefic influences that were sapping the strength of the X. K.

Kenneth made notes with engineer's cautiousness about details and when he left her to return to the tavern he gave her his promise that he would put his best thought on the matter; he asked permission to come back to her the next day for further conference.

She had not been able to inform him very thoroughly just what the Temiscouata was about in the way of actual operations; but she told him enough so that he could guess a great deal, and he saw mischief accomplished and more mischief intended. They were going over his head! It was deliberate attempt to antagonize the competitive interests and make his compromise plans im-

possible of execution. He was obliged to use all the strength of his mind to force himself to turn his back on his rage and give his calm and concentrated attention to what should be done.

The next day, at his suggestion, she wired her lawyer for a statement of the legal aspects of the X. K. affairs and ordered him to follow, in person, his telegram of reply. He wired her that in view to certain new legislation regarding the affairs on the Toban—acts already passed or being then considered in committee, to become law after the usual lapse of time—he had considered it best to discontinue all litigation; his duties in court would not allow him to come north at that time, he added.

But he did not reassure Clare by stating that he had watched the acts and resolves which had to do with legislation for the Toban, or that he had been safeguarding the interests of the X. K.

Kenneth drew her attention to that fact with considerable violence of language. It looked to him as if those interests had been betrayed, and he told her so.

"And I have been silly enough to think that I have been running the X. K.!" she lamented, helplessly. "I have done nothing except keep busy with a lot of petty details. I have been blind to the really big thing!"

"You had a right to think that a good lawyer would take all that part on his shoulders and be responsible, Miss Kavanagh," he said, trying to help her wounded pride.

"Donald told me he was the best money could hire."

"Perhaps Mr. Kezar knows more about picking woods horses than about selecting efficient lawyers. This man doesn't sound right. But I have a college friend in the

law who can be trusted. Suppose we wire him to get on the trail and investigate?"

"I'll be grateful if you can induce him to act for me."

"In spite of my hurry to be in the woods and see just what's doing there, I feel that I'd better stay here at the end of the wire till we know what's what about the law situation."

"It does truly seem as if we might accomplish more if you stay here till we know where we stand." There was a delicious glow in him then. She had adopted the "we" he had been using.

After that they did not refer to the Great Temiscouata or the X. K. "We" was a term which appeared to fit best their earnest co-operation.

Kenneth, again at his work, found that a great many of his morbid forebodings were leaving him. Was he not the Temiscouata's chief engineer, after all, necessary to the syndicate, backed by the directors, son of the president? He did not rehearse what he intended to say to Donaldson when that troublesome gentleman was met up with in the north country. Kenneth was perfectly sure that words of the unrehearsed sort would not be lacking. He began to show Clare the gayer side of his nature and she responded; in her case it was reaction from the distress with which she had been looking on the troubled affairs of her business.

He did not realize how much she was grieving because she had been made conscious of her inadequacy as head of the X. K. She had blindly trusted the greater interests of the concern to others instead of making sure for herself. She dreaded the news which might come from down-country. Yet there was consolation for her in the

thought that this man who was so distinctly capable had promised her his help.

Whenever he climbed the snowy hill he saw her at the window, waiting for him.

In their conferences she confidently bent her head beside his when he explained the details of his blue-prints.

They were in that position one afternoon when Romeo Shank burst in upon them. He did not knock. He did not wait to be announced by Elisiane. He did not pull off his shaggy fur cap. His mouth was open, his tongue lolled, and he was panting like an exhausted dog. "Hell has broke loose!" he squawked. He clapped his mittened hands together with swift blows. "Hell has broke loose!" he said, over and over.

"Get a stop-line across that tongue of yours, man. Don't you realize where you are?" expostulated Kenneth, angrily.

"They've torched on Tim Mulkern!" Then Shank poured out his information in broken sentences. Tim Mulkern had believed lies about his wife. Tim Mulkern had come tearing into Ste. Agathe. Tim Mulkern was gulping down tin dipperfuls of rum in One-legged Clausen's kitchen—the village blind-tiger. Shank had been there when Tim Mulkern had rushed in to find rum to make himself fit for ruin and murder. Tim Mulkern had a sack of dynamite on his back and nobody dared to put up a finger of restraint. And when he was drunk enough Tim Mulkern would blow himself and Rosie and their little home to everlasting damnation!

"But Tim will listen to me!" cried Clare.

"He'll listen to nobody else, colleen!" shouted the fire warden. "It's a last hope. I've run to fetch you. He won't harm you."

She started to get her cap and her coat, but Kenneth followed her and set hands on her arms. "Listen, Clare!" In his agony of apprehension he did not note that his tongue spoke the name his heart held. "You must listen! The man is crazed. You mustn't go."

"But he is mild and good underneath. I can make him understand."

"At 'most any other time—yes! But this is no job for a girl. I won't allow you to go. And there's no time for more talk. Stay here! I command you to stay here. Come, Shank! Let's run for it!"

He did not stay for coat or cap. He leaped away with the fire warden at his heels.

In Clausen's kitchen Tim Mulkern, his dreadful sack strapped on his back, was roaring threats. He made no concealment of his purpose. The three frightened men who had been loafing in the place were backed against the wall.

"I want rum. I want nerve. I'm getting it. And then for it! The front door of hell will be open when we get there, for they'll hear us when we start from here."

Into this scene came Marthorn, plunging through the doorway. "What's the matter with you, Mulkern?" he demanded, fiercely.

"Hold off there, you Temiscouata sneak! I've got an extra stick of canned thunder for *you*. You deserve it. Tell your dirty gang to blow the upper Ebeemah outlet, will yeh?"

"You're lying, Mulkern. Our folks have done no such thing. That would be against my strict orders."

"Orders! Orders!" sneered the dynamite boss. "You're the liar! I tell you that your hounds have blowed the

outlet. But what the blazes do I care now? One more dipper of rum and then I'll show the—"

Marthorn broke in furiously on Mulkern's obscene declarations of what he would do to the woman who had betrayed him.

"My God, Mulkern, I should think such words would choke you! I know your wife and—"

"You're probably one of the crowd that knows her too devilish well! Shut up! I believe my friends. They have told me." He lurched toward the jug on the table.

"It's no use to talk to him," quavered Clausen, holding his crutches crossed in front of himself as if he hoped to make a barricade. "I won't let him be talked to here. He's liable to get mad and blow up my house."

In that horrible crisis Kenneth realized that more appeal from a Temiscouata man would inflame rather than quiet the maniac. The news that the outlet had been blown—sure peril for the X. K. drive—roused mighty anger in the chief engineer. It struck a deadly blow at all his promises to Clare; it left him in the position of a traitor.

At that moment his mental state nearly matched that of the cursing creature who was pouring rum from the jug, wavering on unsteady feet.

It was no time for any fine touches of mediation.

Mulkern's attention was on the jug and the dipper. Kenneth, weakened by illness, knew that he was no match for Mulkern. A struggle would force the hazard of the horrid burden the man bore.

Marthorn yanked one of the stout ash crutches from Clausen, swung and struck Mulkern a wicked blow on the head—a blow that "plocked" dully, like an ax in wood. While the victim was crumpling down toward the

floor Kenneth leaped to him and pushed him forward onto his face. The awful sack did not touch the floor. Mulkern was limp and still and the young man gingerly unstrapped the pack and lifted it off.

"Friends told him, hey?" squealed Mr. Shank. "I know how the friends got what they got! I know how those stories were started toward up-river! I hain't got ears to sleep on and cover myself up with! I use 'em to listen with! It's all more of your Temiscouata work, Marthorn! It is, I say! But I never thought Tim Mulkern would believe their damn' lies about the truest little wife that ever lived. Now you've killed him, haven't you?"

But Mulkern answered that question; he began to writhe.

"I can tell him how the stories got to him. I can make him believe what I say," insisted Mr. Shank.

"If that's so you'd better get ropes on him and make him sit here and listen to you," advised Kenneth. "Here, you men! Get busy!"

Kenneth left Mulkern trussed up and still stupid from drink and the blow, and hurried back to Clare, for he knew with what anguish she would be waiting for news.

When he had given her brief assurance that Mulkern had been taken care of he stood before her and told her the other news. "So that's how the Great Temiscouata has helped me keep my solemn word to you! I'm going back to Mulkern and wait till he's in shape to talk. I want to verify what he said so far as I can. Then I shall have something to say to you."

He felt too much unnerved for further talk with her then. He went and sat in Clausen's kitchen and watched the slow progress of Mulkern back to sensibility.

Mr. Shank had a great deal of precise information and a ready flow of speech, but hours went by before, by dint of iteration and reiteration, Mulkern appeared to be awake to the truth; but he showed no more of his fiery temper. He was dazed and comprehended only by degrees. "So that's what the Temiscouata tried to do to me," he muttered over and over while Shank talked.

Once he turned to Marthorn. "It was you that hit me, was it? Why didn't you make a better job of it? I ain't fit to live."

After that they took the ropes off the man.

He was quiet and stared at the floor.

"I don't know as you're willing to give me any information, Mulkern," said Kenneth, unable to put aside his own affairs any longer. "I'm sorry I had to do it!"

"If ye're sorry because ye saved my Rosie, then ye're no part of a man."

"Mulkern, I swear before Heaven that I have been doing my best to square things on this river. I promised Miss Kavanagh to see that the X. K. got its rights. But look at me! I have been in the hospital for weeks. I don't know what has been going on up here. Will you tell me what you know?"

Mulkern told, listlessly, without visible emotion. He still seemed to be suffering from the blow. A strange, wondering apathy had its hold on him. But Kenneth, listening to the terse declarations, knew that the man was stating facts.

"Her men are with the colleen! They'll always be with her," declared Mr. Shank. "The poor devils mean all right, but when they ain't led right they don't know how to act right. Don Kezar is supposed to be her field boss. But if I know anything about woods operations—

and I reckon I do—he's selling her out. And the Temiscouata is beating her out. God save the poor colleen!"

Mulkern leaped to his feet so suddenly that those with him in the kitchen were startled. He echoed a part of Shank's last words, but it was not a prayer; it was anathema against the Temiscouata and there was hideous significance in his manner. "It's my own business now. It's because of what they tried to do to me with a lie! It's my business and I'll tend to it."

"You'd best go home now, Mulkern," counseled Kenneth. "Miss Kavanagh sent word by me that she will go with you to explain to your wife all about the wickedness of what they tried to do."

"My wife! My good little wife!" cried Mulkern. "Think ye I'd go to her with the taste of rum and the sting o' those hell words still in my mouth? I'll go to her when I can go right. I'll crawl on my knees to her then. But not now! I have business to tend to—my business to tend to—yes, business!" He repeated the words about his "business" many times and there was a growing wildness in his demeanor. The men in the room were silent, not knowing just what to say to him.

"I'm afraid that tunk stirred up his attic-dust so much that it won't settle again right away," confided Mr. Shank to Kenneth in a whisper. "But, thank God, he ain't threatening poor little Rosie any more."

Clausen had applied first aid in the form of a vinegar-soaked bandage for Mulkern's head. The dynamite boss pulled off the cloth and flung it away. He grabbed his cap and his fur coat and rushed out. His blanketed horses were at the hitch-rail.

"But you ought to go to your wife," pleaded Kenneth, following him. "You are going, aren't you?"

Mulkern made no answer. He stripped off the blankets, tumbled into his jumper-sleigh, slashed his whip, and was off.

He was headed toward the north country.

A man who had been looking into an abyss was hurrying back dizzily from the edge; a lie had driven him to seek to slay the innocent woman he loved; the blow that had saved him from being a murderer had rattled his wits.

The man who was riding north did have business!

It concerned men who had shamed a good woman and had given a husband a murderer's heart. It was business which had put affection away from him, as something which might weaken his resolve.

Mr. Donaldson's boomerang was on the return trip.

CHAPTER XXX

Old Noel's pilgrimage is halted by a blow from a coward's brutal fist, and Noel repays a debt by advice how to build a Mellicite bear-trap.

KENNETH MARTHORN was not at all certain as to the specific intentions of Tim Mulkern. But it was plain that the general intent of that *voyageur* of vengeance was mischief, and mischief on a considerable scale.

The Temiscouata had pricked the poison into Mulkern; he was holding the Temiscouata responsible. The prospect was that, unless the chief engineer could prevail as mediator, the relations of the X. K. and the syndicate would be sundered irremediably.

And co-operation with the X. K. formed the crux of Kenneth's hopes.

He did not dare to remain longer at Ste. Agathe.

In the early morning he sought a hurried interview with Clare. He was very serious and rather curt. "I'm going north to find out just who I am and where I stand!"

"I have no doubts of you! You know that. I don't need to tell you again!"

"It's your faith in me that makes my pledge so sacred and vital a thing. It isn't mere business any more! It's making this river free and safe for all the men who use it. I'm only one man, Miss Kavanagh, and I'm feel-

ing mighty small and humble right now. But I'm going up there at once and I'll do my best. And that's the most I feel like saying now."

His humility in manner and voice touched her; she did not reply; the sob she was checking in her throat would not allow her to speak.

"I don't remember just all that I said to you that morning at Dolan's House," he went on. "I was more or less excited. I probably bragged about what I was able to do. I'm sorry if I caused you to put too much confidence in me. By urging you to trust me I may have harmed you as much as that lawyer seems to have done. I wouldn't wonder if he had been placed on the Temiscouata pay-roll, too, along with me," he added, with bitterness.

"I ask your advice—I need it," she entreated. "Isn't it best for me to start for up-country as soon as possible?"

"I wish you'd come before long. I can't see ahead very far just now, I confess, but I have a feeling that I shall need your help most tremendously." He shook his head when she queried with her eyes. "It's a hazy outlook. I'll probably be asking a big favor of you. I can't ask it now because my present association with others would make it dishonorable." He saw that she showed alarm. "The favor, of course, is strictly in a business way, Miss Kavanagh." Then he hurried on after a silence that was a bit awkward. "I advise you, if you'll allow me to suggest, to stay here in Sainte Agathe until my friend posts you on how we stand in law. I'll send him another wire this morning. Come north as soon as you have facts. Now I'll be on my way!"

He put out both hands.

She took them eagerly.

They parted without spoken farewell.

Kenneth sent another telegram besides the one for the lawyer. He wired to the home office of the Great Temiscouata and did not bother to count words or to spare sentences. It was a warning according to the code he had given out at Sebomuk Farm. He stated that unless his full rights of authority as chief engineer were restored he could not remain in the service of the Temiscouata. He requested them to notify Donaldson through the usual avenue of communication with their field director.

Kenneth did not exactly avoid Donaldson after arriving in the north Toban; but the engineer went on a tour of inspection which kept him away from the syndicate's woods headquarters. When that tour had been finished the young man was perfectly willing to meet Mr. Donaldson, and to meet him in a hurry.

There was no cordiality.

Mr. Marthorn gave Mr. Donaldson a complete résumé of what the field director had done in the way of going over the chief engineer's head.

Mr. Donaldson showed no surprise whatever; the news was plainly not fresh. He stated that he had full authority to act for the best interests of the Great Temiscouata and intimated that the example he was setting ought to be followed by anybody else who was taking the company's money.

"But I really am acting for the Temiscouata's best interests! The real interests! The true interests! I want to give it a safe future. It will get nowhere by this system of pin-headed guerrilla fighting!"

"What's that?" demanded Donaldson, with much heat.

"I have said it!"

The two swapped glares.

"I have just come from Ebeemah, Mr. Donaldson. I know what talk Tim Mulkern had with you about that blasting job. I find that you started the dynamite crews there again, after you thought you had Mulkern taken care of."

"Well, any old fool who comes to me and tries to tell me how to run my business ought to be taken care of."

"Even to the extent of making him a murderer and a suicide—is that the idea? I was able to stop him from being either. But he's back in the woods, Donaldson! If I'm any judge of men, you're going to be devilish sorry for what you did to Mulkern."

"Confound you, Marthorn, don't you insinuate that I—"

"Hold on!" The young man put up his hand. He had decided to assume one attitude and hold to it. He would meet bluster with bluff! He would supplement what little he actually knew with what he had pretty shrewdly guessed, after his ponderings. "I don't insinuate. I state facts! I know what is going on. Do you think for a moment that I didn't place paid agents up here when I was obliged to get off my job? My professional reputation was at stake and I proposed to protect it." Mr. Donaldson showed the uneasiness of a man who is suddenly called on to wonder just how much the other man has dug up in the way of damning evidence.

"Bring on your spies and I'll show that they're liars." It occurred to Donaldson that if those agents had detected him in such a secret and crafty operation as starting the Mulkern propaganda, his more open association with Engineer Haines and Donald Kezar could not have remained hidden. Young Mr. Marthorn was regarding

him with a grim smile; the engineer certainly did look as if he knew a great deal!

"Donaldson, you'd better quit."

But the field director had gone too far to turn then and go back; he had spent a lot of Temiscouata money on his own account and must show results. And he put his thumb against his breast pocket and heard the encouraging crackle of a paper.

"When I got to Ebeemah I found that your blasting crew had done about all the damage they could. But I ordered them away from what was left of the ledges," stated Kenneth, dealing Donaldson's obstinacy another blow.

"You did, did you?"

"Certainly! Diverting that water goes far toward killing my general plan."

"It helps the Temiscouata, that water!"

"I'll admit that! But a plan that doesn't safeguard all the river for all its users is no good! I have come back here to be chief engineer, and I'll have no more interference with my own part of the work."

"I have been here all the time as field director, and I'm going to stay. You wired the home office, didn't you?"

"I did."

Mr. Donaldson jerked out the paper that had been crackling beneath his thumb. "That came up a few hours ago by special messenger." He thrust the paper into Kenneth's hand. It was a document from the home office. It was signed by the president and five of the directors. It notified Mr. Donaldson that, by that writing, he was given complete authority in the field over all branches. He was informed that Mr. Kenneth Marthorn had recovered from illness and would report to Mr. Don-

aldson for orders in carrying out the details of work planned by Mr. Donaldson.

Kenneth threw that letter back at Mr. Donaldson and cursed heartily.

It was plain that they had secretly looked on his declarations as vaporings of youthful folly. They had jammed him back where they evidently thought he belonged—a hired man to take orders. They were not willing to accept him as their missionary in a project of amity, enterprise, and beneficial co-operation.

"It's devilish unpleasant, Marthorn! But that's plain reading—and it's your answer."

"I'm truly glad that you have such complete authority, Donaldson. For you're in a position to accept my resignation. I tender it now and here. I am done with the Temiscouata from this moment. Now let me tell you something; I'm talking as an outsider! Seeing that you have gouged the upper Ebeemah, I'm going on with a project of my own at that place. Your only rights there are usurped rights."

"We shall hang onto 'em!"

"If you molest me in what I start to do there, Donaldson—now you listen to me—if you try to trig me or set thugs onto me, I'll come back at you with a scandal that will damn the Great Temiscouata. You know what you have been doing!" he shouted. Mr. Donaldson did know!

The ex-chief of the hydraulic survey stalked out of the presence.

"Project of his own!" pondered the field director. But he was not specially worried. Nobody had ever successfully driven logs down that torrent of terraces and tortuous leaps. When the spring should loosen the ice-bound waters the torrent would be more savage than ever before

because the blasters had blown away the lip of the lake. That Kenneth could or would attempt to dam the outlet was supposition not to be credited. Such a task could not be accomplished in season for the drive.

It would have astonished Mr. Donaldson considerably if he had been made aware that Kenneth was proposing to use for the benefit of the X. K. the identical and special mischief by the Temiscouata that had provoked the final break in relations; it was a case of shooting back with the enemy's spent arrow; it was determination to use the outlet in the condition in which the dynamite had left it.

This was no sudden or fortuitous inspiration in the case of the chief engineer. He had been working for a long time on a method of handling logs in swift waters; he had intended his device for the benefit of the Temiscouata. Kenneth wasted no time in meditation on the fine points of so-called poetic justice. He caught a ride on a tote team and was carried to the depot-camp of the X. K. on the Sickle-hook.

In his prompt interview with Donald Kezar he went straight to the point. He stated that he was no longer connected with the Temiscouata. "We are not at all fond of each other, you and I, Kezar. But this is no time to carry on a personal quarrel while the interests of the X. K. are jeopardized by a rotten deal that I don't stand for in my concern. You have more reason not to stand for it. Give me all the men you can spare for a job that I'll undertake and I'll promise you that the X. K. drive will go through!"

"The hell you will!" sneered the boss.

"Kezar, I'm giving you a chance to prove your loyalty to the X. K. by rising over petty, personal matters. And I'm giving my time and my best efforts."

"Yes, we're getting a lot of volunteers. Tim Mulkern came up here and started to run things. And now you think you can fit in, do you? You can't!"

"I've no time to argue this thing. I'm giving you your chance so that you can save your face. Frankly, I suspect that you're pretty much of a rotter, Kezar. Now show me that you're not. Once more, to save the X. K. drive, do I get those men?"

"I wouldn't give you as much as 'a traveler' offn a Quedaw's shirt!"

"Then here goes! Good day!"

There was considerable of a crew at the Sickle-hook; the teams were hauling logs down from the yards to the landings.

Kenneth waited till the men came out from dinner; he mounted on a stump and addressed them with all the fervor of sincerity and with all the force of language he possessed. At first they were curious and were frankly astonished by this defection of one of the big guns of the Temiscouata. Their mutterings revealed skepticism. But if men will listen and if a man who declares himself is truly honest in his soul he must prevail with some of his auditors. Marthorn saw that he had produced an impression, even though Kezar was rudely thrusting through the group of listeners, telling the men to pay no attention to a liar.

"You men must realize that something is the matter with the X. K. You have been feeling it! I know that you love the memory of John Kavanagh and are devoted to the interests of his daughter!" He pulled off his cap in token of respect and most of the men followed suit. "Your hearts are right, men, but your leadership is wrong! I don't ask to lead you. Simply let me tell you

what to do and how to do it to the X. K. drive. Your boss, Kezar, has refused to assign any of you to help me in this job. In the name of John Kavanagh and his daughter, I call for volunteers."

A spokesman stepped forward. "We all know that something's the trouble up here. It's all lies and guessing and underhand work. We've got to the point where we don't believe anything we hear. We've seen what one lie did to a man. It sent Tim Mulkern outside to do something damnable."

"He didn't do it, men! I stopped him from doing it. I'll tell you how I stopped him—and I tell you so that you may see that I'm in earnest."

He wasted no words; they listened with mouths open.

"I'm not going to do any more talking now, men! I didn't expect you to fall over yourselves, first crack. Think about it! Talk about it! I'll be back here pretty quick!"

"You might tell us where you're going," suggested Kezar, insolently. "I may want to drop you a postal card telling you that we're all willing to take orders from a Temiscouata dude."

"It will be quite easy to reach me," returned Kenneth, with a placidity that was very effective. "I'm going on to every one of the X. K. camps between here and Whirlingstone. I'm going to tell my story. I'm going to ask for volunteers, a few from each crew, so that there will be no disorganization. And I'll get 'em, Kezar, or else the men of the X. K. are not what I believe they are."

"You haven't my permission to go into the camps," shouted Kezar.

"I don't need it. I don't ask for it."

"You'll get hurt"

"So will anybody who gets in my way." He flourished a salute and started off up the tote road.

In the late afternoon, just as the men were filing down from the slopes in the dusk, Clare Kavanagh's sledge made its jangling entrance into the hamlet at the Sickie-hook. Besides her own modest retinue she brought a passenger.

She had met Noel the Bear, scuffing his slow way on snow-shoes far down the river, soon after she had left Ste. Agathe. She questioned him and he said that he was going north; why he was going and where he was going he did not say. He showed no gratefulness when she asked him to ride with her. He stepped in and rode in silence; he was silent at their stopping-places; he stepped out of the sledge at the Sickie-hook and stood at one side in silence.

Clare disregarded the hand which young Kezar put out to her when he ran to the side of the sledge. The cold, even tone of her greeting informed him that there was something decidedly amiss so far as he was concerned.

Worried by consciousness of his guilt, wondering what she had discovered, he was urged by sudden impulse to make a display of his loyal zeal. Therefore he told her about Kenneth Marthorn's visit and talk. Donald boasted that he would not allow any Temiscouata sneak to harm the X. K. The field boss could not have picked a more unfortunate topic. She broke in angrily on his vauntings. "Do you mean to tell me that you have presumed to interfere with Mr. Marthorn?"

"It's more of his brass cheek! It's more of the scheme to ruin us. You're finding out now that my warning was right!"

"I'm finding out a great many things. Where is Mr. Marthorn? Do you know?"

"He's gone on toward Whirlingstone to stir trouble in the other camps."

The driver had started to lead away her horses. She called sharply to him to stay.

"I'll have questions to ask of you when I have more time," she informed Donald. "So that you may have your answers ready I'll say now that I have some interesting reports regarding that lawyer and that engineer you secured for me down-country. And I'm here to find out, first hand, what's the matter up-country. Cameron!" This to the waiting driver. "Feed the horses, but don't unharness them. Get lanterns. We are going on to Whirlingstone. Come, Elisiane! We'll have a bite in the cook-camp."

Kezar remained where she left him. He bored his heels into the creaking snow and mumbled.

To him out of the evening shadows stepped Noel the Bear.

"Keep away from me!" warned the young man.

"Me go to Lola. What me tell her?"

"Me go to Lola"! Four words spoken without emotion in tone or features! But behind those four words—

The old chief, meekly enduring wrath and insult and reproaches, had gone many times to the only place where he could hope to find news of Lola; he went to the island farm. Onésime upbraided him and waved letters and put them into old Noel's hands and taunted him and told him to read for himself. But no word of what the queer marks meant would the *habitant* farmer speak; so Noel sighed and caressed the letters as if there were some comfort for him in the touch, and he gave them back, when

Onésime snapped impatient fingers. The *mère* did not dare to speak to the Indian, such was the ire of Onésime; the father gave them no opportunity to be alone together. But old Noel had a knack for piecing information from incautious speech, even if he had no knack for reading the queer marks. The farmer in his rage dropped word here and there. And after a time the old chief knew that Lola was still in a school at Ste. Anne the Good. Her little store of money was gone. But she did not need much. The Sisters were kind and she might stay and learn all the things which would make her wise. But she hoped her father and her mother would not want her to be a charity scholar; she was ashamed to eat bread she did not pay for. It took Noel a long time to find out all this.

"No, no! Not one centime—not a penny," bawled the father. "They shall kick her out! She only learns to be a bad girl who will not marry a good man." He cracked his hard fist on the kitchen table. "So let her come to her home and learn what I have to tell her. Here she belongs!" Again he beat fist on the table.

So, then, knowing well the nature of the obstinate and stingy Onésime, Noel the Bear put in a leather pouch his small stock of money, he sold his furs, he sold his traps, not minding how he was to earn more money to buy his pork and flour, and he put that other money in the pouch.

He did not know how to send money; he did not dare to put it into a white man's hand. When it was in the pouch, against the skin of his breast, he did not worry. Thus it would go to the hands of Lola for her needs! He faced the north and plodded on his way. He knew the trails and did not fear the cold and snow.

When he came upon the man who could, if he chose, send by him something more precious than the coins which clinked in the pouch, the Indian had only these words for the pilgrimage and the sacrifice: "Me go to Lola! What me say?"

"Look here, Noel, this is a bad time for you to tackle me about any foolishness. I'm about worked up to the point of killing somebody, and I don't care much who it is."

"Me want to say some good thing to her."

"I heard she went through here to go into a convent, or something. Well, let her stay there. We may as well have an understanding on this thing right now," he went on, his rage on account of another matter making him desperately brutal in this. "That was no marriage. She knew it well enough at the time. You're the only one who thinks it's a marriage."

"Me think so!"

"Don't think so any longer. It's all off. I won't have anything more to do with the girl."

"Have much to do with me, then!"

"On your way!"

"I told you—it was the Big Word—to me—a chief!"

This grim insistence—this everlasting repetition—was maddening. In Kezar's mood of the moment he was driven beyond the bounds of decency and caution. He glanced about and was aware that nobody was within sight or hearing. "If you won't take a hint about keeping away from me, take this!" he blazed. He struck Noel in the face and the Indian fell.

Kezar walked off, but while he was passing the wangan-camp, swearing about an Indian, Tom Kilbeck overheard and made a shrewd Scotch guess that there had been

some kind of an encounter over yon in the shadows. He followed back along Kezar's trail. He found old Noel lying prone and motionless; he lighted a match and then called loudly for somebody to lend a hand.

When Kilbeck and another came lugging the Indian the voices of questioning men and the bit of a commotion brought Clare to the door of the cook-camp.

The light from the open door enabled her to see. "Kilbeck, what has happened?" she cried.

They propped old Noel against the camp wall; he was reviving.

"Ut's the Indian who came wi' ye, mum! If my een and a wee bit touch have made me ken richt, his jaw is crackit. Auld bones are ay bruttle."

"But how could it have happened?"

In spite of what Kilbeck was guessing about the future undoing of Donald Kezar, the Scotchman was cannily aware that the young man was still the X. K.'s field boss. "Auld eyes are dull, even as auld bones are bruttle, mum." He turned suddenly on Kezar, who had joined the gathering group. "I mind me that ye came walking from yon where I found him. Ut may be that ye saw him tumble, sir-r!"

"What do you mean? If I had seen him I'd have picked him up," snapped the boss.

"What happened to you, poor Noel?" Clare asked, going to him.

But he stared straight ahead and said nothing.

"Ut's har-rd to wag a crackit jawbone," suggested Kilbeck. "Wi' your word, mum, I'll take him to my camp and keep him and mend him; I have a bit knack in bone-tinkering."

"Do all that you can for him, Kilbeck. Don't let him

leave while I'm away. He's in no shape to be wandering around these woods alone."

"I'll do and tend for the auld grandsir, mum, even if ut's only because he's kin to the lonesome lass who passed here with the grand canoe. Come, auld sir! Hang onto my arm. Ye're a harmless sort and I can trust ye amang my kitties. Ye wouldna kick a cat, eh, what?"

For a full half-minute Clare stood and stared into Donald's face; his countenance was revealed in the lamp-light which streamed from the door. Her brows were puckered, her lips were apart, and it was plain that he found her scrutiny hard to endure.

"Bring my coat, Elisiane!" she called. "We're ready, Cameron!"

In a few moments they were away, the big reflector lantern throwing its light ahead of them into the mouth of the tote road.

Out of the bandages which bound his face old Noel whispered piteous appeal to be allowed to go on. But Kilbeck was adamant. "Ye heard the strict orders. Ye must stay till she comes back."

Then, little by little, whispering painfully, giving information by degrees as he tried to make this jailer understand that the errand was an urgent one, the chief confided to the patiently lowered ear of Kilbeck the needs of Lola.

"Eh? Carry the money all the way, ye auld numb-head? And what's the mails for? Gaw' bless ye, mon, wait till the lass o' the lofty place is back here. She'll send the money. She made a friend o' your girlie. Ye can trust Miss Clare, eh?" The old Indian jerked earnest assent with his head. "Ut's lucky for ye thot ye're so prompt to say so. Otherwise ye'd stand a braw

chance o' having me crack t' other jaw. So ye no need to stir stivver from this camp till ye're mended. If need be, the colleen will send your money over the telegraph wire—there's some way they do it. The colleen will know! Ye may send all of it. Ye need none here. Ye're visiting Tom Kilbeck, mon, understand ye thot! I have a rare favor to ask o' ye! Ye can consider ut my pay, if ye'll feel better to have ut thot way. D'ye ken the method o' the Mellicite bear-trap?"

Old Noel mingled resentment and reproach in his grunt.

"Ay, I ken that ye must know. I'm sorry the question provoked ye! And we'll be about ut varra soon. For there's an auld hellion that's lurking on the ridge yon. He'll be gobbling the colleen's stores if we don't catch him."

This opportunity to repay by service was plainly welcomed by the chief. He went into the forest the next day, Kilbeck at his heels. His search ended when he came upon a prostrate tree, wind-felled upon a high knoll. In its fall the tangled roots, like clutching fingers, had gripped a mass of earth and rocks, and the great plat was poised on its edge, held in place by the trunk of the tree. A gesture or two by Noel and Kilbeck understood. It was only necessary to saw the tree-trunk close to the plat, trig the mass of earth and rocks, arrange a spring—and there was the trap!

"Ay," declared Kilbeck, "ut takes an Indian to make the auld woods join drives and help. A pan o' Porky Reek sweetness to tole him into the hole! Ut's easy. We'll be up to ut when there's a slack time."

In the afternoon of that day Tim Mulkern appeared at the Sickle-hook camps. The men who were there

kept warily away from him. He gave no sign that he noticed their timidity; he passed word with nobody. He had come down from the hills, riding on his jumper. Tom Kilbeck had no comment to offer or protest to make when Mulkern loaded box after box of dynamite from the store-camp on his sledge. Mr. Kilbeck, as custodian, affected to be so busily engaged that he did not notice Mulkern. The latter rode off toward the hills.

After he had gone a Temiscouata boss came to the Sickie-hook looking for somebody in authority; he wrathfully declared that Mulkern had held off the blasting crew at the upper outlet and had taken the stock of dynamite.

"He was always middling fond o' the stuff," commented Kilbeck. "But I never conseedered that he'd be gangin' oot o' his sound wits aboot ut." He pondered on the aloofness of Mulkern and on the man's ominous and brooding silence while he had been at the camp. "A wee bit wrang alaft, if I guess richt! If ut happens as I'm minded ut's likely to happen, they'll be prenting news about the Toban and it 'll all start off with 'from latest reports.'"

"I've come here for dynamite to replace what he stole."

"All the dynamite ye'll find here, mon, wouldna blow a snowflake off a lassie's cheek. Hunt for yourself if ye don't credit my wor-rd. And ye'd best go hunt for Tim Mulkern. He has enough of ut now so that he can pay the Temiscouata back."

CHAPTER XXXI

Kenneth Marthorn tames the torrents and then does a sudden job as a father-tamer, incidentally beginning a courtship wrong end to.

KENNETH MARTHORN proceeded to harness and to tame, for the uses of the X. K., the wild thing that the Temiscouata had turned loose when the dynamite shattered the natural gateway of the waters of the Ebeemah outlet.

Clare overtook him at Whirlingstone while he was making his canvass of the X. K. camps.

Their legal investigator's reports which she brought revealed that what he had been suspecting was a bitter fact; there had been no move to make the temporary injunctions permanent by action before the court; no legislation which would help the X. K. had been introduced; no attempts had been made to block Temiscouata legislation which was inimical to the X. K. The girl had trusted her agents and had been betrayed into the hands of the opposition.

But he comforted her in her humiliation and remorse as best he could; for her further encouragement he explained what he proposed to do and, with her at his side to give him standing and authority, he set about doing it.

The thaws were imminent, but the ice bridge still held back the waters of the lakes, he was able to take advan-

tage of the situation, and he threw a little army of toilers into the gorges of the outlet.

The outlet was a succession of "jumps" down the terraced mountain-side. Between the leaps there were ledgy shelves, short spaces of dead-water and slow-moving current. Here and there were remnants of the former works which had been left by those who had tried to drive the stream by old-fashioned methods; there were hold-dams to control flow, there were splash-dams to direct the current and guide the logs.

But attempts "to drive" the outlet had failed. The operators had lacked technical skill of the modern sort and had none of the bold vision of the inventor. They had attempted to bridge the jumps with ordinary sluices. When the water had been turned on from the hold-dams and the logs were moving, the sluices overflowed because the pitches were steep and the volume of water could not be sufficiently controlled. The logs, borne high on the rushing current, jumped the track like unruly railway cars and were jackstrawed in heaps of timber.

In this abundance of abandoned "jillpokes" the engineer found plenty of material right at hand.

His men, fired by the presence of Clare and their new understanding and their awakened loyalty for the X. K., obeyed him and worked desperately. And there was enthusiasm, too! They promptly realized that Marthorn had solved the problem of the gorges.

He built log lanes down the middle of the descents.

There were many natural receptacles for the ends of his uprights, pot-holes wrought by the attrition of whirling pebbles through the centuries. Between the uprights the workers bolted horizontal, parallel logs, each log "choked" apart from its neighbor a few inches.

It was a device which tamed the torrent!

Kenneth explained to Clare that, according to his estimates of volume of flowage and amount of relief afforded by the gaps, the sluices could not overflow. The logs would not be thrown out upon the ledges. The surplus water would gush out between the sides of the cribwork, but enough current would be left in the log lanes to carry the timber safely and rapidly to the main river. He predicted the success of this plan with all the emphasis of his knowledge of hydraulics. Its success meant that the bulk of the X. K. logs would go into the main river in one-quarter of the time consumed by the slower methods of the lower outlet.

So much for the Donaldson boomerang!

As for the Grindstone hold-dam which Field Director Donaldson had gone ahead and amplified according to his own notions of what the Temiscouata interests needed, Engineer Marthorn took anticipatory action; he despatched a messenger to his lawyer friend and requested him to apply for an injunction on the broad grounds of the common law—an injunction which would give the drive of that spring free passage down the Toban. Kenneth had no time then for fighting the general scheme of monopolistic legislation. He felt that he could leave that for the future. But the future of that season's X. K. drive was imminent, was in peril. He had sworn to himself that he would put Clare's logs into the sorting-boom.

He set men with rifles to guard the cribwork o' nights.

The routes of the hauling-teams were diverted to the upper outlet. Logs which were already on the regular landings were transferred as rapidly as possible. From yards and ramdowns the timber was poured from the slopes to the ice of upper Ebeemah.

Donald Kezar did not wait for Clare's return from Whirlingstone.

The prospect of those questions, his knowledge of his guilt, the maddening certainty that she had accepted Kenneth Marthorn as her champion, left Kezar no option; it was plain that he no longer had any place in her affairs. He left for her a curt note stating that he had decided to take a job with the Temiscouata where he would be better appreciated. She showed the note to Kenneth with the air of one who was immensely relieved. The engineer offered no comment. From all he knew about Kezar that man was considerable of a coward, and in this matter, threatened with the truth, he had taken a coward's natural course.

Kenneth was devoting more apprehensive thought to the invisible Mulkern than to any possibilities of more mischief from Kezar.

Mulkern was menace!

The man had not declared what he intended to do; his silence, his continued absence from his work, were symptoms of a spirit of vengeance that was implacable. Kenneth realized that for a man of Mulkern's nature the provocation had been unpardonable.

Grace o' God and a stout ash crutch had kept him from killing the thing he loved best.

The Temiscouata had pointed its lying finger of slander and had urged him on.

Kenneth, pondering on these things, frowned up at the hills, speculating on what a half-crazed man might be expected to do. Mulkern was in the hills. Mulkern had enough canned thunder to serve the purposes, almost, of an angry Jove.

Noel the Bear stayed on at the Sickle-hook, after Clare

had promptly relieved his worries in regard to Lola's money. Mr. Kilbeck had taken a fancy to the Indian and urged him to stay, and Mr. Kilbeck flattered himself that Noel was obeying because of mutual liking; but the gossipy Scotchman was obliged to do all the talking, and he was somewhat puzzled because old Noel sat and whetted a big knife all the time he was listening. To be sure, the chief used the knife to good account when he skinned the bear that was trapped by the deadfall which he and his friend had made of the propped tree-plat. But the continuous honing of the blade made Kilbeck nervous.

"Donald, he no come back?" he asked one day, squinting along the line of the blade.

Mr. Kilbeck did not reply for a few moments. He looked like a man who had unexpectedly solved a trick puzzle. "Auld mon! Lookit here noo! Ye're sitting and ye're brooding o'ermuch. I've thocht o' a job for ye so thot ye willna feel beholden—so thot ye can be oot and aboot. Go and trail Tim Mulkern. Ut should be easy for an Indian. I've hear-rd a bit o' the talk between the lass o' the lofty place and the lad who has lifted her troubles. Ye'll win a bright smile from the lass if ye'll find Mulkern. She and the wee wife are much worrit."

Day by day old Noel went forth and searched the hills.

A messenger journeyed all the way from New York with a letter to Kenneth from his father. It was peremptory command to come home, and 't contained sundry caustic references to what a run of illness could do to a man's wits.

Young Mr. Marthorn sent back a letter by the messenger. He drew attention to the fact that he was no

longer connected with the Great Temiscouata and was, therefore, not amenable to orders from the president; speaking to the colonel from the family angle, Kenneth stated that he was not homesick and politely drew attention to the lack of cordiality in the invitation; such a rough tone could not possibly attract a prodigal, he suggested.

He went on with his work.

He found it engrossing enough to take his mind off family and other matters. And the continual presence of Clare at his side, eagerly, gratefully surveying and encouraging, provided further material for his thoughts.

And the element of danger entered to complicate the general interest; every now and then shots were fired from the covert of the wooded slopes above the men who were working on the log sluices. Nobody was hit. It seemed to be foolish and wanton attempt to intimidate the toilers.

Then something happened which suggested that the X. K. proposed to retaliate—an outpost supply-depot of the Temiscouata was blown sky-high one night when the caretaker was away.

Mr. Donaldson hurried savagely to Kenneth, but their interview was not even as satisfactory as their preceding one. In that first one there had been a fair stand-off and a sort of understanding. In the latter one they arrived at no conclusion whatever. Donaldson disclaimed all knowledge of the rifle-shots and Kenneth was equally emphatic in declaring that he assumed no responsibility for the acts of Mulkern, providing Mulkern was guilty of blowing up the depot-camp. "I must remind you again, Donaldson, that Mulkern is something of your own making. You and I are familiar with the story of

Frankenstein's monster. I'll say, however, that I'm trying to catch him. He is not on our pay-roll any longer. By the way, is Donald Kezar on yours?"

"He is not." Donaldson's emphasis was convincing. "We're playing a square game."

"Then I suppose you stand ready to let our logs go through without bothering them at the hold-dams. My plans provided sluices. Will they be open?"

"To the extent our own interests will allow."

"Of course, you'll respect the injunction we have applied for?"

"We shall fight the granting of any injunction. A down-river judge can't understand the exigencies of a log drive."

"And that's the best word you have for me—simply more of this cursed fighting?"

"I'm giving you about the same kind of a word I got from John Kavanagh one year ago. He stood up and—"

"Better not, Donaldson! If you slur a dead man I'll class you with your friend Kezar who struck a man who is one hundred years old. *I'm* here. Talk to *me*!"

"I'll let President Marthorn do that! I have summoned him. He'll probably know what to say to you."

"Unquestionably! My father has a fine command of language. Furthermore, in spite of his prejudices, I'm sure that he has a better conception of justice than is shown by some of the other officers of the Temiscouata."

"I thank you," said Mr. Donaldson, tartly.

"If you really feel that I am referring to you, you need not mind the thanks, sir."

There seemed to be no more to be said, and they said no more.

Kenneth was daily aware that he felt a peculiar sense

of embarrassment when he was alone with Clare; their mutual concerns demanded frequent conferences. Her dependence on him was absolute; she did not presume to make suggestions even when he asked for them. It was evident that she had come to distrust her own qualifications. Her trust in his efforts to extricate the X. K. had become so supreme that the relationship between them assumed a rather sacred quality, not to be inspected with too much analysis or alarmed by awkward explanation. Therefore, in his love for her he was ill at ease! To presume upon her gratitude at that time was not to be thought of; furthermore, there was the unexplained secret of his marriage. He was not sure of her sentiments. Her devotion to the soul of the X. K. had undoubtedly aroused her grateful interest in the man who was on the job for her sake—and, so he reflected, that might be her only interest in him. After he had arrived in the upper Toban he had explained to her the nature of the favor he intended to ask of her if certain associations became too hateful; it was to be allowed to do just what he was then doing. She had accepted him on a business plane as an expert; he felt in honor bound to content himself with that status.

Old Noel daily searched the hills, hunting for trails.

For the most part the camps at the Sickle-hook had been abandoned. The principal activities of the X. K. were at the upper outlet while the work on the sluices progressed. As it drew near the time for the rains, the torrents, and the drive, Kilbeck moved up there with the stores and Noel was still his guest. The old chief was assiduous in his search, out in the dawn and back in the dusk, doing his best to pay for the hospitality that had been extended. But he could not find Tim Mulkern.

Tim Mulkern knew the holes and the hiding-places in that region better than the Indian knew them.

Tim Mulkern, to judge by what was happening, was still abroad in the hills. The bateaux of the Temiscouata were blown up, cache by cache. Minor hold-dams on the small streams were rent and ravaged by dynamite. Every few nights there would be a distant thud as of the hammer of a giant pile-driver dropped from the skies; then the roar of an explosion would come booming over the trees.

In spite of the dire need of every ounce of man-power on the X. K. enterprises, Kenneth was half minded to put out a crew to sweep the woods and hills in search of this lunatic marplot. But when he suggested it he found no man ready for the service. They had tasted the quality of the Mulkern spirit of desperation and had no relish for more!

And, so it seemed, Colonel Marthorn lacked relish for further personal contact with a disobedient and wilful son. The colonel did not hurry to obey Donaldson's summons.

But what Donaldson's plea could not effect Tim Mulkern's activity compelled. The devastator was extending his operations; he was attacking bigger things; he was wounding the Temiscouata in its most vital parts. There was no longer any doubt about the identity of the operator. One day Mulkern appeared suddenly before the four men who were guarding the dam at Patch Heath, a Temiscouata property. They did not dare to shoot him; it would mean the "tripping" of the contents of that grisly pack upon his shoulders. When he made motions as if to fling a stick of dynamite at them they threw down their rifles and ran. He blew up the dam at his leisure.

After that Colonel Marthorn and several of the directors came north in a hurry.

The "southern sky" was brooding over the snow-fields; the frost was letting go; the woods twitch roads were slumpy o' days, and the X. K. teamsters worked by nights under the moon when the cold had stiffened the snow on the slopes.

A rainstorm with its few days of thaw gave Kenneth an opportunity to observe how his cribwork would handle the rushing water. The torrent roared down the gorge for several days and the log lanes did not overflow. The test showed to him the weak places and, after frost had sealed the gorge once more, he made the weak places stronger.

It would have been better for all concerned if Colonel Marthorn had postponed meeting his son until the Temiscouata's president had forgotten some of the tortures of his floundering sledge journey along slushy tote roads. In his rage the colonel piled all responsibility for Mulkern onto Kenneth and called the young man "a confounded guerrilla." Young Mr. Marthorn, after all his wearying days and his worrying nights, was in prime condition to tell the president of the Temiscouata what sort of a gang of lying, cheating, nefarious scoundrels the syndicate condoned and harbored. Within a week Kenneth had been shot at three times, provided the crack of a rifle and the shriek of a bullet were to be accepted as evidence. Though the colonel looked alarmed for an instant, he was frankly skeptical the next moment when Donaldson winked at him.

The whole affair was a collision instead of a meeting.

There appeared to be no prospect that the Temiscouata and the X. K. could get together.

As a president, the colonel wrathfully walked out of

the X. K. wangan-camp where the meeting had taken place. He returned in a few minutes, as a father, only slightly placated. The two were alone. "That Appleton ape and his gabble-tongued wife are making free with that marriage folly of yours. Seeing that you haven't done me the honor of acquainting *me* with the details, I'll give them to *you*; it will refresh your memory and afford you an opportunity to check errors of statement. It appears that the Mister Appleton methods are very exhaustive!"

Kenneth bowed when his father had finished the recital of the discoveries. "I have nothing to add or subtract, sir. As you say, Mister Appleton is exhaustive."

"He and his wife are making a business of telling anybody and everybody, saying it's out of their friendship for you. They came to me and told me. I'm informed they made a special trip to Sainte Agathe to tell that Kavanagh girl. But I can understand well enough that it was no news to her," declared the colonel, seeing the queer light that flamed in Kenneth's eyes. "I suppose you have put her ahead of your family in giving her your secrets, just as you have given her your services."

"Sir, I have not been made aware that Miss Kavanagh knows."

"Of course she knows! The Appletons have been up here! They'll be making a lecture-tour next! You must stop their fool tongues!"

"No, I'd rather finance the lecture-tour. I never realized before what a prince of good fellows Bob Appleton is," he cried, smiling radiantly.

"I'll not stultify myself enough to ask whether you are going to put the climax on your undutifulness by marrying this girl."

Kenneth did not reply immediately. He turned and gazed out of the window, unwilling to expose his joy to the choleric contempt his father was exhibiting. He could see Clare in front of Kilbeck's door, playing with the kittens.

She had begged Kenneth to take all the responsibility of the conference. She had appealed to him with the anxious apprehension of a child who was asked to perform an impossible task. She did not want to hear what those men of business from the city had to say. She had not been able to win back her confidence in herself. "You have all the authority; I give it to you. I hope I don't appear too selfish or altogether helpless or useless. But you know best what should be done."

That was not the head of the X. K. in front of Tom's door; it was a girl playing with kittens; she had confided to her accepted champion all her affairs.

"I warn you, sir, that such a marriage will be posterous!"

"Just a moment, dad! You and I have dropped the business talk. We'll be simply father and son, and I want to show due consideration. I don't want you to waste a lot of breath and temper if there's to be no marriage." Then this young man, whom impulse frequently made incomprehensible according to usual standards, went to the camp door and called to Clare. She came slowly. When she was near him she shook her head in protest and made *moue* of reproach. He put out his hand to her and bowed her through the door. "My father and I have come to an important matter which positively cannot be settled without you," he told her. He added hastily, to dispel her alarm about business talk, "It's about marriage."

The colonel snapped stiff greeting. She divided stare of astonishment between the two.

"My father has brought me some wonderful news. It's about what the Appletons are doing for my interests. I'm sorry that anybody has ever had any occasion to deal with such a topic. But Bob Appleton has proved a helpful friend and I'm in the mood to accept benefits. I take it that you have heard the truth!"

What he saw then in her big eyes clinched his resolution in his daring design. "I have been rather undutiful in answering questions my father has put to me regarding that affair. I'm sorry I was obliged to keep information from him. I want to be frank and obedient ever after this. I know you are willing to help me to be that, aren't you?" he pleaded, holding to her hand.

"I will help you any way I can," she assured him, wonderment in her demeanor.

"He has just asked what, for me, is the most important question of my whole life. He wants to know if you and I are going to be married."

The colonel flashed glance of fury at his son. "I must impress upon your attention, young lady, that this talk is wholly without my sanction!"

Clare tried desperately to pull away her hand, but Kenneth clung to it, and then, in order to make sure of her as a captive, he put his arm about her waist. "Clare, I know that right now this seems to you like enormous impudence. Really, I suppose it is. But the opportunity offered itself, a wild idea came to me, and I'm going to rush on while I've still got breath. I'm not going to waste time in telling you how much I love you. It's too precious a subject to be bandied before a third person, and it would probably bore my father. You see,

he's very impatient! But I want him to know exactly how you and I stand. Pardon my bluntness, but we must respect his hurry to be off about his business. Will you marry me?"

It was a situation which forced plain honesty—it discarded the trappings of formality. Kenneth, estimating her character, had judged keenly the value of that situation.

The silence demanded speech from her. She got control of herself. This was not a case where an insignificant girl was seeking to force herself into the Marthorn family. Manfully, bravely he had asked her. She had known that he would ask her some day. She could be as brave and as sensible as he. She straightened and gave Colonel Marthorn proud challenge by pose and gaze.

"Yes, Kenneth," she said. She wasted no more words than he.

"This is the first time the matter of our marriage has been mentioned between Clare and me," Kenneth went on. He tried to assume his amiably teasing tone, but his voice trembled and the arm about her waist shook. "Naturally we're a little vague about any details right now, but we think it's for June, after the X. K. drive is down. Say the middle of June after Cora's wedding, so that she may come along with you and mother to our wedding on a sort of honeymoon trip!"

Col. Stephen Marthorn, proud and opinionated and irascible though he was, had many elements of the good sport in him, as Kenneth immediately informed himself with enthusiasm.

The colonel took two steps toward Clare and bowed. "My good wishes, Miss Kavanagh!"

He turned to Kenneth. "My congratulations." Then

he stalked out and joined the directors of the Temiscouata who were waiting for him on their big sledge.

Kenneth and Clare were alone together, but he did not approach her; she was regarding him in decidedly frightened manner. He knew that impetuous love-making at that moment would be precipitancy particularly unwise.

He smiled at her whimsically, lovingly, imploringly. "Dad is doing just the best he knows how, dear heart! It wasn't bad for such short notice. He'll be giving three cheers a little later. You aren't sorry—you're not worrying one bit, are you?"

She shook her head slowly.

"And, of course, it's only right for him to be nice—and for mother to be nice. They can look back and see that I never did one thing to interfere with their courtship and marriage."

He put out his hands; she hesitated.

"We seem to have begun our courtship right where most folks wind it up, Clare. But, now that we've got all the worry of the engagement thing off our minds, let's go clear back and begin the courtship. You're not going to be cheated out of that courtship. Every girl ought to have a real courtship to look back on. We must start with the little bashful attentions and all that! It'll be wonderful! You know I'm not the least convinced yet that this is reality. The courtship will last a long time while I'm waking up to the blessed truth."

"I love you, Kenneth," she whispered, leaning toward him to answer the appeal of his outstretched hands.

He went to her and took her face between his eager palms. "God bless you, my colleen!"

CHAPTER XXXII

Rosie Mulkern finds Tim; there are others who find blessings and happiness and the treasures of love.

THOUGH Noel the Bear searched far and faithfully, he did not find the man he sought.

He found other things. He told Kilbeck of a bear's tracks and of another ready-made deadfall. The tree, when it crashed to earth, had shivered its trunk across a ledge; a few slashes with a knife would free the stump.

"But never ye mind ut noo," said Kilbeck. "Ye keep on wi' the hunt, for the mon is getting doonricht outrageous. Gi' me the lay o' the land and I'll go to ut some day if the time serves."

The Indian pointed to an old-growth pine which made a notable landmark on the crest of a ridge far down the gorge.

"Close to thot, eh? Wull, I'll hold ut in mind."

And because Noel had not found Mulkern, Kenneth advised Clare to send in a hurry for Rosie, the wife. It was sensible suggestion. In spite of his elusiveness, Mulkern must be near the river, keeping sharp watch on all the activities of the region. If Rosie should show herself in the hills, the crazed man might come to her; in that case he could undoubtedly be controlled by her.

He must be controlled; 'twas a wicked thing—an honest man compassing his ruin in that fashion!

Noel found something else, but concerning that he spoke to no man; he found the camp where Donald Kezar was hiding himself; Noel, meditating patiently, was in no mood to share Donald Kezar with anybody at that time. He watched the movements of the young man; he followed with Indian stealth and saw Donald go again and again to the ridge above the outlet gorge.

Noel several times heard the report of a rifle echoing from thickets to which he had traced Donald. At what sort of a target Kezar aimed or what game he sought the Indian could not determine. He became more cautious, pursued with more careful stealth. He still honed his knife in Kilbeck's camp, but he asked no more questions about the whereabouts of Donald Kezar.

When the X. K. logs began to run Kenneth and Clare viewed the rush of the timber down the gorge with considerable equanimity and new faith. Their lawyer had been able, in spite of opposition, to secure a temporary injunction, and the Temiscouata had been ordered to give the X. K. logs prompt and free passage.

But Tim Mulkern was not in a position to receive news about that injunction; in the past he had not shown any special knowledge of what an injunction was or what it looked like, providing there could be actual visibility; on the night when he came to Grindstone hold-dam the darkness was black and he would not have been able to see even a visible injunction. He began to hurl his warning dynamite sticks when he was far off; there was no such thing as locating him; the guards were stampeded; there was no sensible way of coping with a terror who came out of the black night, bombing

a way for himself as he came. He destroyed one of the wings of the big hold-dam. The X. K. logs could not be stopped that spring!

But more demoralizing than the destruction of tangible property of the Temiscouata was the effect of Mulkern's bodeful activity on the morale of the syndicate's driving-crews. Out of the night a bawling voice warned them that they'd better keep out from under the feet of the X. K. In order that there might be no misunderstanding as to what that advice meant, Mulkern drove the Temiscouata men out of Abol gorge, hurling sticks of dynamite after them as they fled. The echoes roared among the flinty cliffs in the caves of which Mulkern hid himself.

Clare Kavanagh, when she talked to Colonel Marthorn at Sebomuk, had tagged succinctly the general character of the syndicate's employees—rovers, nondescripts, and cowards. They began to desert in squads in the season when there was most vital need of everybody who had two legs and two arms.

Colonel Marthorn, though he hated the Toban with all his heart, was not able to leave in that exigency. The distracted Donaldson had felt obliged to confess to the president and directors what sort of animus was operating in the case of this senseless, uncontrollable embodiment of destruction. The field director was sufficiently contrite; he pleaded justification—the stand of Kavanagh the previous year, the necessity of grabbing before the other fellow got in ahead!

"Confound it!" snapped the president, after a gloomy discussion by himself and the directors, "that system accounts for just what is happening. Here's one lawless, insignificant man doing us incalculable damage. But

we're afraid to take him to court! Donaldson, I ought to have let my sense of honesty and decency operate last spring when you came down from these woods with your report. The methods you suggested might have been policy once, according to the code up here, but they're not good business, and we're finding it out. I've allowed certain matters to prejudice me and dwarf my better judgment. At this moment I'm not talking as Kenneth's father; I'm talking as president of our company. We have made a great mistake in balking the plans of our former chief engineer. We should have kept him on the job with full authority. In spite of the complementary fact that he's my son, that's eating humble pie, but I have decided to declare myself!"

"I have felt that way right along," stated Director Deakins.

"His illness complicated matters," said another of the board. "He has not been given a fair show in working out his plans."

"I wish I had never interfered with 'em," declared Second Vice-president Donaldson, sourly. "I set out to achieve results, and there seemed to be only one system of getting results up here. Gentlemen, I guess I didn't figure human nature right! We'll have to let discussion of mistakes and hydraulic plans rest. But there's something that can't rest—and that's our drive! That devilish dynamiter has me locoed! I'm neither a clairvoyant nor anything bomb-proof. Let's send for a sheriff, give him our men for a posse, and I'll take the blame of it."

"After the trial, public opinion would tar every official of the Temiscouata with the same stick," said the president.

"Then Mulkern must be handled in some way through the X. K.," averred Donaldson.

"It's too bad that we're not in a position where we can co-operate," complained one of the directors.

After that tripartite confession of Temiscouata inadequacy in handling a certain problem the silence was prolonged for some time.

"Colonel Marthorn, you are in a position to know better than the rest of us how definitely and permanently your son is tied up with the X. K.," ventured Mr. Deakins. "At the meeting the other day I privately hazarded the guess that his hitch-up there is merely temporary. Seems to be simply the outcome of resentment! He very frankly told us he considered we had betrayed him and his promises."

There was no telling what Colonel Marthorn's queer expression signified. "As Mr. Donaldson just said, we have a drive to get down, and we can't waste any time about it. Whatever my son's future plans are, it's plain that he is right at this time the administrative head of the X. K. If I volunteer to go to him and do the best I can in this emergency, will you consider that I'm arrogating too much power, gentlemen?"

"We have been hoping that you would suggest it," said Mr. Deakins, speaking for the others.

When Colonel Marthorn arrived at the upper Ebeemah he was greeted by Kenneth with cordiality that instantly paved with inviting smoothness more than half the way to a complete understanding. Both of them felt that fact without the aid of the spoken word.

On their way to a conference in the wangan-camp Kenneth indicated a young woman who was walking near by with Clare. "It's Mulkern's young wife, dad!

Clare and I sent for her. It's in the hope that she can coax him out of the hills. I mention this so that you can see that we're doing all we can to stop this infernal thing."

Again Kenneth had occasion to give his father mental encomium as a good sport. The colonel marched over and greeted the two young women. "You're Mrs. Mulkern, Kenneth tells me. Pardon me if I didn't wait for a formal presentation. But this does not seem to be a good time for formality, Mrs. Mulkern. I'm sorry for you in your trouble. For what part the Temiscouata agents had in the matter I'm tremendously sorry! I ask you to forgive them. And forgiveness must be mutual, you know, to be of any worth. So here's my offer! Get your husband down from the hills, bring him to his senses, and make him the good man he was before this dreadful wickedness was started. Tell him that no harm will come to him for what he has done to our property. I am the president of the Great Temiscouata and have authority to promise that." He turned from the perturbed Mrs. Mulkern to Clare. "I have authority to promise other things, Miss Kavanagh. I am here to talk with you."

She had plenty of woman's discernment. She saw that father and son were about to come to a better understanding; their faces showed it. Whatever she might represent in the economy of the X. K., in that conference she was perfectly well aware that she would merely complicate a most desirable situation between the Marthorns, father and son.

"I hope you will find it easy to talk with your son on all the business of the X. K., sir. He understands everything; he has full power."

"But we may discuss something more than a mere

temporary adjustment of troubles. I may want to go into the preliminaries of a general rearrangement."

"I would only be in the way, sir!"

The colonel had been courteously urgent, but he was plainly relieved by her refusal. "I'll promise you this, Miss Kavanagh! While Kenneth is safeguarding your *business* interests I will take personal charge of the protection of your *sentiment* regarding the X. K. I have been thinking the matter over; I have thought over several other matters as well. I understand you better. The X. K. and the Temiscouata ought to be able to live side by side in friendly fashion, now that we're in a position to have a good understanding." He divided kindly and suggestive glance between them.

"Or better even than friends!" urged Kenneth, partly in jest, smiling down on Clare. "There may be an excellent chance for a job of match-making here! Dad, the X. K. has a wonderful dower—it will bring the mills, the lands, and the spirit of its men. But it mustn't come as a kitchen slavey—it must come as a true helpmate!"

To Clare's cheeks rushed the flame of devoted zeal; in her eyes blazed eager entreaty. "Colonel Marthorn, the money, the power, the brains of the Temiscouata need the soul of the X. K." In that passionate declaration she suggested a solution of all the labor troubles of the big round world!

"I have pondered considerably on the subject of the soul of the X. K. since you talked to me at Sebomuk Farm, Miss Kavanagh. Our men are performing in a way that shows us we have no such asset."

He walked off, and Kenneth, after giving the girl a reassuring pat on the arm, followed.

"Rosie, the millennium is coming to the Toban—I know

it!" whispered Clare, excitedly. "But did you hear what Colonel Marthorn said? He will forgive poor Tim if you can find him and make him good."

The little wife wiped the tears from her cheeks and looked helplessly at the hills.

"I know, Rosie! It's too much to expect of you. But only think what it will mean if you can do it—no, if *we* can do it. I don't amount to much in the X. K. now, except as help to Kenneth. He's doing it all. He's carrying all the load. But there's something you and I can try to do, Rosie. Women can do it better than men. We must find Tim!"

She began to act with her old self-assurance. She ordered horses put to a jumper. Kenneth did not see her depart; she went by a road which avoided the windows of the wangan-camp.

Tim was in the Abol region.

So, when the journey had been made, there was a strange and pitiful sound in the ledgy fastnesses where John Xavier Kavanagh had raised echoes when he stood forth and cursed the laggard sun.

Rosie was plaintively calling for her mate.

She felt that on her was the responsibility of his salvation; he had been promised to her as her own if she could make him good once more.

To and fro among the crags she wandered, hand in hand with Clare, plaintively, thrillingly, tremulously calling, "Tim!"

She added words of love and reassurance and pleaded with the echoes. But farther than all the other words winged the throbbing pathos of, "Tim! My Tim!"

He appeared to her at last; he came from the mouth of a cavern on his knees; he dragged himself toward her,

still on his knees, his hands outstretched. The hideous sack was no longer on his shoulders. She ran and was wrapped in his arms. "I 'ain't finished with 'em yet, Rosie. I 'ain't done with 'em for the sake of you and the Colleen Clare! But I couldn't stay hiding when I heard you," he sobbed. "I'll finish with 'em and then I'll come to you—come to you right."

"Tim, you have finished! You must come with us—come now," pleaded Clare.

"No, there's all what's ahead. There's Ragmuff and Gulf Hagas and the Black Gods and—"

"Tim, it is being settled in another way. Listen to me!" She kneeled down in front of him and talked long and earnestly, but he mumbled and blinked at her across Rosie's shoulder and did not seem to understand.

"And you say they're running, Colleen—running all free!" he said, over and over.

"They're running, Tim—our logs! Nobody will stop them," Clare insisted.

"And you say they don't want me for the prison?"

"No, Tim, no! They want you to go home with Rosie. You have been sick. She will make you well."

He pondered for a time and then rose and started down a path which led to the river. Clare and Rosie followed and did not attempt to stay him. He was calm and thoughtful and, in spite of his haggard face and straggly beard and ragged garments, he seemed more like the Tim Mulkern who was always kind and good.

The gorge was roaring full of logs and white-water. He went as close to the brink as he dared and shielded his eyes with his palm and gazed down.

"Mr. Kavanagh, sir, they're running free," he shouted. "God bless 'em, running free! And ye say my work is

done and I can go home? Thank ye, sir. Ye always have been kind to me when I have done my best." He turned and looked at his wife's face. For a moment, in that new and quiet mood of his, he showed surprise—but only for a moment. "Rosie darlin'," he whispered, "I'm glad ye've come. Ye'll take me home, won't ye? Whist! I had to show ould X. K. that marrying ye hadn't spoiled me for the place at his right hand in the drive. But I'm so tired, darlin', so tired! Take me home. I want to rest."

They were obliged to call for Cameron, for Tim's eyes closed and he staggered weakly. "I want to rest," he whispered, repeating it many times.

"When he wakes up he will be your own Tim once more," said Clare, bravely encouraging the frightened wife. "Take him home. It will make him well."

There was plenty of water that spring, for the snows had been deep and the rains heavy. But it was the "soul of the X. K." that put both drives down together, after Colonel Marthorn and Kenneth had bound their separate concerns to a plan of immediate co-operation and to a more elaborate future project of affiliation and compromise.

Before his departure for the city Col. Stephen Marthorn paid Miss Clare Kavanagh a call which had nothing to do with business.

He chatted amiably; tactfully he reserved his *amende honorable* for his parting words, in order that he might give her as little cause for embarrassment as possible. "Miss Kavanagh, allow me to say that I deeply value the honor you have done us by accepting my son. Mrs. Marthorn will communicate with you by letter. Two occasions will make June a very happy month for us old folks."

Noel the Bear continued his daily study of the movements of Donald Kezar; if the old Indian understood that he was looking upon the vacillating inconsistencies of a jealous and revengeful coward or suspected that he was observing the actions of a man who was bold enough to perform when opportunity offered, is not to be determined. Noel was a person who had very little to say, even to himself.

Kenneth and Clare remained at the outlet; the drive was running free below and the regular bosses were in charge. The tote roads were almost impassable in the spring floods, and Clare determined to stay in the north country until the subsiding waters made the river safe for her canoes.

Kenneth, faced by new conditions, began a resurvey. He traveled about the region as best he could, but he was hampered by the inundation which made rivers of tote roads and lakes of low ground.

He sat with Clare one day in front of Tom Kilbeck's door; he pointed to the lone pine on the ridge far down the gorge. "I have been looking at that tree for a long time. I have a mind to take my climbing-irons and the range-finder. I ought to be able to lay out considerable topographical work from that tree while I'm waiting for this mud to dry up."

"Your pardon, Muster Marthorn," apologized Tom Kilbeck. "But if ut's the gang-far peep ye're wanting, thot upstickit yon gies your een plenty to do. I've been up ut!"

"If you go to the tree I'd like to go with you, Kenneth," urged Clare. "We ought to find fairly dry picking along the top of the horseback."

"Of course, ye'd ne'er go crawling into a bit hole in

doing your wor-rk, Muster Marthorn. But keep oot o' holes doon there." He ducked obeisance to Clare. "Ut's a bear-trap, mum. I did ut in the Sawba'-day slack time."

But for Kenneth, speculating on how much of an outlook he might obtain from the tall pine, and for Clare, rapturously surveying her lover, catching him at a time when he was engrossed in thought, the subject of Mr. Kilbeck's bear-trap held little of interest. They asked no questions and he volunteered no further information.

Noel the Bear, pursuing his quest the next day, found himself hard put to it all of a sudden.

Kezar had been making daily trips along the horseback to a point where he could overlook the outlet camp. He came running back in such haste that Noel was obliged to throw himself on his face in a coppice.

Holding from one side of the ridge path, dodging from tree to tree, the Indian followed Donald, after the usual manner of the trail. He found that he was obliged to keep rather closer to the young man than was prudent; but there were others coming along the path; a man and a woman were chatting sociably, making their presence and their whereabouts known; it enabled Noel to keep out of their sight while he kept Donald in view most of the time. Over and over again Kezar stopped and took aim, steadying his rifle by means of a tree. Each time he lowered the barrel and went on. The trees were thickly set on the ridge; he may have lacked resolution; he may have found the trees troublesome.

The ridge offered but little real covert for an assassin who wanted to make sure of his job and to hide his identity. The growth was mostly beech and ash, and the trees and bushes had been stripped of their leaves. But

that this man with the rifle was now desperately seeking opportunity was plain to the pursuer who had watched him in the past with such intentness.

Old Noel drew the knife he had been honing for so long.

He dropped lower down the ridge; he hurried; he began to run, even though his old heart might crack for it. If he could get behind this renegade with the rifle! That was it—get behind him; as it was, Noel had been facing him most of the time; Kezar was walking backward, ducking and dodging.

But at last there was a covert; it was an ideal one. Kezar saw it and hurried up the side of the ridge; the path dipped at that point and that was why the covert was ideal; it was above the path. It was a hole under the upcocked plat of a fallen tree. Old Noel looked up from where he rested on his hands and knees. He saw Kezar sneak backward into the hole, rifle across his forearm. So he had chosen his ambush; he had resolved to kill!

Noel rose, the honed knife in his fist.

He lifted foot as if to rush toward the hole. But he halted his step and stood poised in that fashion, in the petrified position of a pointing hound. He felt the stab of a sensation which he had never experienced in his years, one hundred and two. He saw Death lay revengeful and restraining and ruthless hand on one of its unworthy agents. The plat smashed down and lay with soil edges welded. Upraised, the plat had seemed odd, out of place. Now the riven stump jutted from a stretch of earth which was fitted back into the place where it had been resting through all the years.

Noel clambered to the spot and stood beside the trunk and raised the honed knife and said a prayer to mighty

Pamola, that god of vengeance of all the tribes which once made up the great Abnaki race! Pamola had taken it all upon himself! Pamola had revenged the White Lily! Pamola had saved the honed knife from the dreadful stain of a human being's blood!

Old Noel threw away the knife—threw it far. He folded his arms and stood there on the fallen plat when Kenneth and Clare came along the narrow path. Clare halted her companion. "Look there, Kenneth! It's Noel the Bear."

They saluted him carelessly with hand-flourish and went on their way.

Until they were out of sight behind the screen of trees the chief stood on the knoll, as motionless as the shattered fragment of the tree beside him.

To the vision of those who had passed below along the path, absorbed in their love for each other, he was merely one of the pictures of the woods—a worn-out old vagrant, silent, senile, stupid.

One who looked on him with fuller understanding would have found him, in that grim and somber attitude and mien, a statue which might fitly deserve the inscription, "Fate."

Standing above the horror which nature had sealed away forever, he stamped his foot. "You hear me, eh?" he growled deep in his throat. "You say you no marry to Lola? Huh! That's so! No words make folks be married. Not even Big Word! Something else make folks be married. Me go tell Lola!"

When he had walked down to the path he stooped and patted his gnarled hand upon the ground; in the manly footprint of Kenneth, marching ahead along the narrow path, Clare, at his heels, had pressed the outline of her

shoe. The old chief did not know what the queer marks of the white man's writing meant; but here, in these wedded footprints, he had found the Mellicite symbol of marriage; the wife followed behind her husband in the ancient days, along the Indian trail. He caressed the ground where the two had trod. "Something besides words! Words don't make folks married!"

The Indian trudged back to the depot-camp and stood in front of Tom Kilbeck, who was sitting in the spring sun, whittling dancing-balls as playthings for the kittens. Noel's intent and somber stare continued until Tom snapped impatient question.

"Down there!" The chief pointed toward the tall pine. "Trap drop. Me see him."

"Anither bear, eh? Good work! I'll go doon wi' a couple o' naggies and the tackle-and-falls."

"No bear!"

Tom dropped his knife and stood up; he looked puzzled and frightened.

"Donald Kezar!" Noel said it with as little emotion as he had declared that there was no bear.

Kilbeck became sickly white and sat down. "Gawd! I've rigged ut to kull a mon!"

"Come to say me no tell! You no tell. So good-by!"

"Wait, Noel! Wait!" pleaded the Scotchman, tremulously. "You saw him? But how could ut happen? There was the trip-trigger in full sight. There was the pannikin o' treacle. There was the bit board wi' the word o' warning. And why would he be crawling into a hole?"

"He back in No look behind. In hole to shoot man"

"Blood o' Bruce! There's only one mon doon thot trail to-day, besides yeself, he'd hanker to shoot."

"No shoot! No kill anybody any more! Nobody know. Me no tell. You no tell. Me all done here. Must go. Good-by!" He took his pack from the peg inside Kilbeck's door and went away with the air of a man who had something important to attend to.

The Scotchman remained on his stool, his elbows on his knees, his hands dangling limply. In his consternation he watched the Indian depart; he made no protest and he did not return a word to Noel's farewell. One of the kittens clawed its way up Kilbeck's trousers leg and climbed to his shoulder by way of his arm; the kitten sniffed at his ear with little cold nose. "Dinna ye be hunting for what went in there just noo, wee wallop! Ut's a sair dreadful thing thot went in there! Ut'll ne'er come oot!" He sat and meditated for a long time. "Listen, auld mousers! Ut is already kenned by the lass and her lad and by many more that he had reason enow to run away, and to stay away for ay. And nobody cares nowt, save auld Grands'r Jingle-cash behind his wuckut in the bruck hoose! Ut'll be for me to go to grands'r and say thot Donald hinted to me thot he was going awa' to better himself, and then he would come dancing hame! I owe thot to the grands'r to make an auld codger's last days hopeful, if nowt else."

So the cats and the kittens, crowding at Kilbeck's feet, listened to the only funeral discourse, such as it was, concerning Donald Kezar; they heard the first suggestion of a rumor which was later accepted as fact in the valley of the Toban.

One day in June, in Ste. Agathe, Paul Sabatis and Noel the Bear made the carry, going north, and put in their

canoe above Tulandic. On the shore Clare and Kenneth strolled, watching the hold-booms filling with the logs of the joined drives.

Clare called to the Indians and they waited.

"What can you tell me for news about Lola, chief?" she asked. She questioned Noël rather than Paul; there seemed to be some mystery in regard to Lola's relations with Paul.

"Him! Him tell!" returned the chief.

She found an answer for herself before the young man spoke. There could be only one reason for the light in his eyes and glory of happiness on his face.

"All is well with her, mam'selle! She is at Sainte Anne the Good. We are going there. She will come home with us." His tone caressed the word "home" with inexpressible tenderness.

"Do I understand? May I—" she hesitated.

He had pulled off his hat when she approached him. He held it toward her and pointed to a folded paper that was skewered with quills and held the hat's flap against the crown after the manner of a cockade. "I suppose the Indians used to find more poetry in the woods in the old days," he said, smiling. "At any rate, mam'selle, the maiden used to send her token, and the lover, with great pride, set it in the feathers of his head-dress and wore it when he went to claim his bride. I trouble you with poor affairs of my own, perhaps. But because I am happy I tell you. Because I am so happy I wear it! It is a letter from Lola."

"My hand to you, Paul! And to Lola take my best love. I, too, will trouble you with an affair of my own." She stepped back and put palm of proprietorship on Kenneth's arm. "Very soon there will be a wedding up

on the hill. We shall welcome friends. You'll bring Lola to see us, won't you?"

The sincerity of her tone was convincing; this was no condescending patronage.

"She will be glad to come, mam'selle! Her stay with you was short and sad; but her talk about you has been long and loving."

Then he and the chief went on toward the north, dipping deeply, paddling sturdily.

On their way back from the river Kenneth and Clare made a detour through the village; they had extra instructions to leave with Tim Mulkern, who had insisted on having full charge of "the bull-pen," his name for the general barbecue. He had also insisted that the city caterer must keep his own place on the hill among "the high-toned folks."

Clare had canvassed with Kenneth the plan of a quiet wedding; but they had given up that idea with the despairing conviction that it would never do. The Toban expected, with complete and guileless faith, certain things from John Xavier Kavanagh's daughter on her wedding-day. And did not that wedding signify the marriage of the Temiscouata and the X. K. as well? And if that didn't call for a celebration, what did?

Their way from Mulkern's took them past the brick office and the cottage of Abner Kezar.

The old man was at work in his flower-garden, thriftily using the time between his supper and the dusk. They stopped and leaned upon the fence.

"And still not any news?" asked Clare, solicitously.

"Figger-four" came limping toward them, his seamed face puckering with a sort of beseeching smile. That had been his attitude toward Clare ever since the disap-

pearance of Donald—unspoken apology, deep humility, and a mysterious and elaborate devotion which she found it hard to understand. “Not definite! Not exactly definite, Miss Clare! But hopeful—hopeful! One investigating bureau has clues—is on a trail! And he’ll come home. Oh yes, he’ll come. He’ll see my advertisement. It’s worded as you told me—‘all forgiven.’ And he’ll know that by your kindness he’ll surely be forgiven. Just a moment, Miss Clare! I have been gathering them for you. I was coming up the hill pretty soon! But if you’ll take them it will save me the walk. I don’t feel quite able to walk much these days!” He hurried away and returned with a bouquet which he had dampened from his watering-pot. All old-fashioned flowers! Assembled with an old man’s poor skill in assortment! But she took them with real gratitude and patted the wrinkled hand which gave them to her.

“We shall have your boy back soon, grands’r! Be of good courage!”

The lovers walked slowly away together.

The old man knelt upon a strip of sward that bordered a pansy-bed. He made pretense of being much engrossed by his work, but his tears dropped upon the questioning little flower-faces that were upraised to his face, and his hands did not move.

THE END

